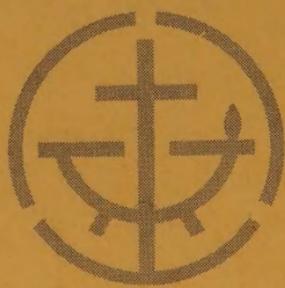


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CHRISTIAN SYMBOLS FROM THE CATACOMBS.

(Photographed from casts of the originals, in the possession of the Rev. Archd. Paterson, B.D.)

(For Explanation, see Appendix I.)

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THE HISTORY AND LITERATURE OF THE EARLY CHURCH

BY

JAMES ORR, M.A., D.D. 1844-1913

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United Free Church College, Glasgow*

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PREFACE

THIS little book in its original form was one of the volumes of the "Christian Study Manuals" series (1901), and as such was found helpful to many in Colleges and elsewhere engaged in the study of early Church history. It has been for some time out of print, and many inquiries have been made after it. The opportunity has therefore been taken of republishing the book in this revised, enlarged, and generally improved form, in which, it is hoped, its usefulness as a preliminary aid in the study of the period may be continued. In explanation of its contents it may be stated that the book is based on the extended lectures on Early Church History given by the author when Professor of Church History in Edinburgh. Although, therefore, necessarily highly condensed, it is believed that few points of importance in the History and Literature of the first three centuries have

been overlooked, while the practical experience of teaching has enabled the author to throw into due prominence and perspective those aspects of the subject which are of chief moment. The book, while concise, is thus by no means a slight or hastily got-up production, but represents, in compressed form, the results of many years of study and actual class instruction in this department. This is one reason for believing that it may be found of utility to others. The present edition embraces a new chapter (ii.) on Christ's teaching on Kingdom and Church, and is otherwise enlarged and brought up to date in notes and references. It is also furnished with a serviceable Index. Many points in the treatment will be found to receive further elucidation in the author's works, *Neglected Factors in the Study of the Early Progress of Christianity* (1899), and *The Progress of Dogma* (1901).

For the two original and valuable illustrations of Catacomb Inscriptions, with their explanations in Appendices I. and II., the author has to express his indebtedness to the Rev. Arch. Paterson, B.D., now in Richmond, Surrey.

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CHAPTER I

THE JEWISH AND GENTILE PREPARATIONS

THE history of the Church may be said in strictness to begin with the Day of Pentecost. The Day of Pentecost, however—the conception of the Church altogether—had its antecedents. The New Jerusalem did not come down from heaven quite as it is pictured in the Apocalypse, without manifold links of connection with the past. St. Paul has this in view when he says that it was in “the fulness of the time” that God sent forth His Son (Gal. iv. 4).

I. The Old Testament Preparation.—Manifestly, the Christian Church has a peculiar and genetic relation to the Old Testament. For the Old Testament community was also in its way a **Theocracy**—a Church (*cf.* Acts vii. 38; Heb. ii. 12). The word *ecclesia*, used in the New Testament to designate the Christian society, is that chiefly used in the LXX as the equivalent of the Hebrew word *kāhāl*, assembly or congregation.¹ Though bound up with national forms, that theocracy ever cherished in its bosom the consciousness of a universalistic destiny. Older than the national form in its existence was the patriarchal—the covenants with the Fathers—and here already we have the clear enun-

¹ On terms *cf.* Hort's *Christian Ecclesia*, Lect. I.

ciation of the idea that Israel was a people called with a view to the ultimate blessing of the race (Gen. xii. 3, xviii. 18, etc.). That idea reaches its fullest expression in the glowing predictions of the **Prophets** and the **Psalms** (e.g., Is. lx.; Ps. lxxxvii., R.V.). With the prophets, too, we see the rise of a new idea—the thought of a Church within a Church, a true and spiritual Israel within the natural Israel—which is the birth of the Church idea proper (*cf.* Is. viii. 16-18¹). A further important step in the formation of the Church consciousness was taken in the **Babylonian Exile**, when the people, driven from their land, and deprived of holy city, temple and sacrifices, became a Church in the full meaning of the word. Their return to Palestine did not annul this feature of their religious life. On the contrary, their return was marked by a new development of religious institutions—priestly government, the formation of a canon of Scripture, the rise of scribism, the reading and teaching of the law—all which prepared the way for the liberation of the Church idea from its national and political form.

¹ On this passage in *Isaiah* Professor W. R. Smith remarks: “The formation of this little community was a new thing in the history of religion. Till then no one had dreamed of a fellowship of faith dissociated from all national forms, maintained without the exercise of ritual services, bound together by faith in the divine word alone. It was the birth of a new era in the Old Testament religion, for it was the birth of the conception of the Church, the first step in the emancipation of spiritual religion from the forms of political life,—a step not less significant that all its consequences were not seen till centuries had passed away.”—*Prophets of Israel*, pp. 274, 275.

2. The Post-Exilian Preparation.—Of special importance in this connection are the four following series of facts :—

(1) The rise and spread of **Synagogue Worship**.—The synagogue may go back to the days of Ezra ; in any case it was a prominent institution after the return, both in Judæa and in the lands of the dispersion (Acts xv. 21). We note about it, in contrast with the temple, its *local* character, giving it practical universality ; its *simple* and *spiritual* worship—reading of law and prophets, reciting of prayers, singing or rather chanting of psalms, a discourse or exhortation, in which the passage read was expounded and applied, a concluding blessing ; and the *absence* of all *priestly* or *sacerdotal* offices. The officials were the “elders” (probably identical in towns with the civic elders), the *archisynagogos* or “ruler” (one or more), who had the charge of the public worship, the “minister” or servant (Luke iv. 20), corresponding to the modern sacristan or beadle, “collectors of alms,” with an “interpreter” (Targumist) to give the sense of the lessons in the current Aramaic.¹ There was considerable freedom in the service. The Scriptures were read, the prayers recited, the exhortations given, not by officials, but by persons selected from the congregation (Luke iv. 16-20 ; Acts xiii. 15). The resemblance to a simple Christian service is obvious.

(2) The rise of the **Jewish Sects**.—The greater part of the period after the exile is an absolute blank in our

¹ The “ten men of leisure,” said to be retained to form a quorum, are subject of controversy.

knowledge. The one thing certain is that from the time of Ezra the nation set before it as its ideal the strict observance of the law of Moses. Hence the rise of an order of men whose special business it was to guard, develop and expound the law—the order of the *Scribes*. When the curtain lifts again in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes (B.C. 175), we find ourselves in a different atmosphere, and the three parties of historical note among the Jews are already in existence. The **Pharisees** first appear as a party of protest against the lax Hellenising tendencies of the period. The name they bore—“*Assidæans*” (Heb. *Hăśidhîm*)¹—denotes them as the strictly “pious” or “Puritans” of their day. Parties of this kind, however, are peculiarly liable to degeneration, and in their exaggerated scrupulosity and excessive literalism, the “*Assidæans*” soon sank into the “*Pharisees*” (separated) as we know them in the Gospels. The **Sadducees** (probably from *Zadok*), on the other hand, were not a religious party at all, but simply a political or aristocratic clique, into whose possession the honours of the high priesthood and other influential offices hereditarily passed. They represent the worldly-wise, diplomatic, time-serving party in the state, men of sceptical, rationalistic temper, and epicurean in their view of life. They disappear after the fall of Jerusalem. Of much greater importance for the history of the Church, though not mentioned in the Gospels, is the third of these parties—the **Essenes**. These had their chief settlement in the desert of Engedi,

¹ 1 Macc. ii. 42, vii. 13.

on the north-west shore of the Dead Sea, but were found also in the towns and villages throughout Palestine. Their total number was about 4,000. At Engedi they lived as a sort of brotherhood with customs of their own. They offered no animal sacrifices, contenting themselves with sending to the temple gifts of incense. They abounded in lustrations, and wore white garments. They rejected marriage, and practised community of goods. Their employments were chiefly agricultural, but in the towns they exercised trades. They had the peculiar custom (perhaps Oriental) of greeting the sunrise with prayers. They forbade slavery, war, and oaths, were given to occult studies, had secret doctrines and books, etc.¹ The superficial resemblances have led some to trace Christianity itself to Essene sources, but in fundamental ideas no systems could be more opposed. We shall see that Essenism probably became ultimately merged in a form of Christianity.

(3) **The Judaism of the Dispersion.**—The dispersion had its origin in the captivities, but was more due to voluntary settlements for trade. The Greek rulers did everything they could to attract settlers to their newly-founded cities, and the troubles in Palestine made multitudes willing to leave their native country. Thus it came about that there was hardly a land or city where Jews were not to be found. They sometimes had rights of citizenship, and in many places, as in Alexandria, enjoyed special privileges. The effect on the Jew himself

¹ On the Essenes cf. Josephus, *Antiquities*, xiii. 5, 9; xviii. 1, 5; *Wars*, ii. 8, 2.

was profoundly and insensibly to modify his whole manner of thought. A freer spirit was necessarily introduced. From being a citizen of Zion, he became a citizen of the world. The dispersion provided points of contact for Christianity through the spread of the synagogues (*cf. Acts, passim*), the circulation of the Jewish Scriptures in the Greek tongue, above all through the creation of a large body of *proselytes*. But outside the circle of proselytes proper there was in most communities a following of converts—the “devout persons” of the New Testament (Acts x. 2, 22; xiii. 16, 26, etc.)—who, while attending the synagogues, only observed the Mosaic law in certain leading points—*e.g.*, the Sabbath. Many of the first converts of the Gospel were drawn from this class. It is noteworthy that the admission of proselytes was not only by circumcision and sacrifice, but by baptism, and, if Talmudic statements are to be trusted, the children of proselytes were baptised with their parents.

(4) The contact of Jewish thought—particularly at Alexandria—with Hellenic Culture and Philosophy.—The classical name here is Philo, though the elements of Philo’s doctrine are already met with in the Apocryphal *Book of Wisdom*. Philo was born about B.C. 20, and lived till near the middle of the first century. He was therefore a contemporary of both Christ and St. Paul. Profoundly versed in Greek philosophy and literature, he sought to bring about an amalgamation of Jewish and Greek modes of thought. His characteristic doctrine is that of the *Logos* or “Word” of God, whom he con-

ceives of partly in Platonic and Stoical fashion, but whom, at the same time, following hints of the Old Testament and of the Jewish schools, he tends to hypostatise, or interpose as a distinct personality between God and His creation. His doctrine has often been compared with that of the Apostle John. There are, however, radical contrasts. The Apostle has his feet on historic facts (John i. 14; 1 John i. 1-3). Philo's theory would have repelled an incarnation.¹

3. Providential Mission of Greece and Rome.—The splendour of Athens in the age of Pericles should not blind us to the fact that for Greece as a whole the fifth century B.C. was an age of decline.² The great colonising energy of Greece was in the previous century. The mission of the Greeks was not to be the rulers, but the **intellectual educators** of mankind. The rule passed to Macedonia, and for a brief moment it seemed as if Alexander's dream of a Greek empire of the world was to be realised. His empire fell to pieces at his death, but his great design was fulfilled of diffusing Greek letters and culture wherever his arms had gone. Rome gradually gathered up the fragments of the Macedonian empire, but Rome herself yielded to the intellectual supremacy of Greece. It cannot be too firmly grasped how profoundly Greek influences had taken possession of the Roman empire at the beginning of the Christian

¹ Harnack says decisively: "The conception of God's relation to the world as given in the Fourth Gospel is not Philonic. The Logos doctrine there is therefore essentially not that of Philo."—*History of Dogma*, i. p. 114 (E.T.).

² Cf. Freeman, *Chief Periods of European History*, Lect. i.

era. Greek language, Greek philosophy, Greek literature, Greek culture were everywhere. Rome itself was at this time in great measure what Juvenal calls it, a Greek city. It is a fact which may not always strike us that the *Epistle to the Romans* was written in Greek.

While, however, profoundly influenced by Greece, Rome's providential mission was different from hers. It was the task of Greece to show what the human mind can do at its highest and best in the way of natural development ; to teach the world the elements of her own culture and civilisation ; to give it a language fitted for every noble purpose of thought and life. It was the function of Rome to bind the nations together into a **great political unity**—to weld them by strong bonds of law and government into a vast, universal commonwealth. The practical instinct of the Roman people and their genius for government enabled them to accomplish this as no other people of the world could have done. It is no chance coincidence that the hour of the completion of this great political fabric was also that of the birth of Christianity—that the two events almost completely synchronised. The world-empire and the world-religion came into being together.

4. The Greek Preparation.—The very intensity of the intellectual development in Athens tended to hasten a moral dissolution. The Greek religion was not one which would bear looking at critically. The popular theology in Greece was simply that of the poems of Homer. When this is said, it is easy to see that its foundations must have been swept away the moment

men began to inquire rationally into the causes of things, and to entertain more elevated moral conceptions. Morality in the older period had rested largely on tradition—on custom. Now a spirit of inquiry had set in which would allow nothing to custom. A class of popular educators (the Sophists) had arisen who had no difficulty in dissolving the most cherished beliefs in the play of their sceptical dialectic. Other causes aided the collapse. Even the enervation of morals by the refinement and luxury of the prosperous period was not so fatal to moral life as the long-continued and exhausting wars of states, with their woeful lack of principle in public men, the constant breach of faith in treaties, the strife of factions, and like evils.

But Greece had a more important service to do for Christianity than simply to reveal the depths of her own moral impotence. The preparation had a positive side as well. With the overthrow of the old religion there was going on, on the part of the nobler spirits, a search for a more rational and abiding foundation for religion ; with the overthrow of the old morality there began with Socrates the search for a deeper ground of morality in man's own nature ; with the breaking up of the old states there was seen in Stoicism the rise of the conception of a state or commonwealth based on reason, wide as the world, and embracing man in a new brotherhood. In these three directions therefore, (1) a more inward view of morality, (2) the recognition of a common nature in man, and the reaching out to a universal form of society, and (3) a tendency to Monotheism, clearly

discernible in all the nobler minds, we are to look for the positive preparation for Christianity in the ancient world. But all these advances of the human spirit could not avert the dissolution of belief and morals. The note of uncertainty in later Greek philosophy is very marked (Sceptical Schools). The most earnest minds were those who felt it most deeply. Dissatisfied with human opinion, they felt, as Plato phrases it, the need of some "word of God," which would more surely carry them (*Phædo*).

5. The Roman Preparation.—If the philosophy of Greece could not save Greece itself, it was not to be expected that it would be able to save Rome. The Romans were a people of graver, more serious disposition than the Greeks. They had not the quick, versatile imagination of the Greeks. Their gods were mostly personifications of abstract ideas (Justice, Pity, Clemency, Pleasure, and the like). Religion was to them a very serious part of the business of life, to be engaged in with strict formality, and punctilious observance of prescribed rites. Their gods were viewed, too, as more really the guardians of fidelity and virtue in household and state than among the Greeks. All testimonies accordingly bear witness to the severe virtue and simple manners of the early Romans.

This simplicity did not endure. With the growth of power—especially after the fall of Carthage and Corinth—there was a great inrush of foreign customs. The Greek gods came with the Greek culture, and a change took place in Roman religion for the worse. Altered

conditions in the state co-operated to bring about deterioration of morals. The old distinction of patrician and plebeian was supplanted by that of rich and poor. The wars destroyed agricultural industry, and threw the land into the hands of wealthy men, who farmed their estates by gangs of slaves. Slavery became the basis of the social structure, and labour was despised as beneath the dignity of citizens. The populace were supported by doles from the state, or largesses from nobles, and lived only to be fed and amused ("bread and games," Juvenal). The sanguinary spectacles of the amphitheatre fostered in them a cruel and bloodthirsty spirit. Marriage lost its sacredness, and licentiousness flooded society.

What all this meant for religion it is not difficult to foresee. The chief features, in a **religious respect**, are: (1) The wide prevalence of scepticism, or total unbelief among the cultured or educated classes; and (2), the vast growth of superstition and a great influx of foreign cults among the people in general. The cults chiefly in favour were the Oriental, and this again shows that the religious consciousness had entered on a deeper phase. For, whatever the defects of the Oriental religion, there was expressed in most of them a deeper feeling of the discord, the pain, the mystery of life, and many of their rites showed a longing for redemption.

Special importance attaches to the rise of an entirely new cult—the worship of the emperor. In **Cæsar worship** the religion of paganism may be said to have culminated. The Roman people had long been familiar

with the idea of a Genius of the Republic. Now, when all powers and offices were gathered up in the emperor, he became to ordinary eyes an almost godlike being. From this the step was easy to formal apotheosis. The Senate took this step when they decreed divine honours to the emperors—many of them the basest and vilest of mankind. Yet this worship of the emperor took root, and, in the provinces especially, gained amazing popularity. A special class of guilds (*Augustales*) sprang up to attend to it. The peculiarity of it was that it was the one worship which was common to the whole empire. In it also the Roman Empire expressed its inmost spirit. As the deification of brute power, it was the strongest possible antithesis to the worship of the Christ. It was the worship of the beast.

Luxurious, frivolous, sceptical and corrupt as the age was, however, there is not to be overlooked in it the presence of certain better elements. As in Greece, so here, the preparation was not wholly negative. Stoicism and Platonism had received a religious tinge (Seneca, Plutarch), and exercised an elevating influence on the purer minds. There were, doubtless, numerous individual examples of virtue. The *Collegia* (organised associations or guilds) of the empire, and the *Mysteries* have intimate and curious relations with the history of the Church in the first centuries. Dr. Hatch would explain from the former several of the offices of the early Church.¹ The mysteries of Mithras, Professor Harnack

¹ *Organization of Early Christian Churches*, chaps. ii., iv. Cf. Hort, pp. 128-210.

says, were in the third century the strongest rival of Christianity.¹ The burial societies were legal, and the Christians took advantage of this for their protection. When all is said, the verdict of history on that old world must be that it was as corrupt as it could well be to exist at all, and what was worse, had not within itself any principle of regeneration.

6. Christianity and Roman Law.—What is sometimes said of the tolerance of the Romans requires to be taken with considerable modification. The Romans had laws enough against foreign rites ; even where the practice of a foreign religion was permitted, this permission did not extend to Romans. Christianity, therefore, fell under the ban of the laws in a double respect. It was un-sanctioned (*religio illicita*), and it drew away Romans from the established religion. Even with this disadvantage, however, it might have escaped, for the authorities found it impracticable rigidly to enforce the laws.

But there were special features about Christianity which, from a Roman standpoint, made tolerance impossible. Christianity was not a *national* religion. The sentiment of antiquity respected the gods of other nations ; but Christianity appeared rather in the light of a revolt against the ancient faith from which it sprang, and had no national character of its own. It had no visible deity or temple, and to the popular mind seemed a species of *atheism*. Specially, it could not fail to be seen that, with its exclusive claims, it struck

¹ *History of Dogma*, i., p. 119 (E.T.). Their strange caricatures of Christian rites were a source of perplexity to the Fathers.

at the very existence of the Roman state religion. If its precepts were admitted, the state religion would be overthrown. The more earnest men were, therefore, to maintain or revive the prestige of the established system, the more determinedly must they oppose this new superstition. The irreconcilability of Christianity with the established religion came naturally to its sharpest point in the refusal of Christians to offer at the shrine of the emperor. This was an act of disobedience in a vital respect, which could not be passed over.

Add to this the manner in which Christianity came into conflict with the laws prohibiting secret and nocturnal gatherings; the powerful material interests affected by its spread (*cf.* Acts xix. 24-27); the odium in which Christians were held on account of the crimes imputed to them by their enemies; the outbursts of popular fury to which they were exposed in times of public calamity, and it will readily be understood how, even when there was no general persecution, they lived in a constant state of insecurity, and how the very "name" of Christian should be held sufficient to condemn them.

Points for Inquiry and Study.—Compare Synagogue and Church (services, offices, etc.). Compare Essenism and Christianity. Give a fuller account of Philo, and compare his doctrine with St. John's *Prologue*. Show how with Socrates and after him moral thinking in Greece took an inward turn. Illustrate Monotheism among Greeks and Romans. Read Tertullian's contrast of Christian meetings with heathen *Collegia* (*Apol.*, chap. 39). Find out more about the *Mysteries* and their relation to the Church. Illustrate the position of Christians in the Roman Empire from Pliny's letter to Trajan, and the *Apologies* of Justin Martyr and Tertullian.

The following books may be consulted on the subjects of this chapter: Besides the *Church Histories* (Neander, etc.), and articles in Bible Dictionaries, Edersheim's *Jesus the Messiah*; Döllinger's *Jew and Gentile*; Uhlhorn's *Conflict of Christianity*; Pressensé's *Ancient World and Christianity*; Fisher's *Beginnings of Christianity*; Schürer's *Jewish People*, etc.; Lightfoot on "Essenes" (*Commentary on Colossians*); Freeman's *Chief Periods of European History*; Loring Bruce's *Gesta Christi* and *The Unknown God*; Schmidt's *Social Results of Early Christianity*; Hatch's *Organization of Early Christian Churches and Influence of Greek Ideas*; Ramsay's *Church in Roman Empire*; Dill's *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*; Harnack's *Expansion of Christianity* (last two valuable on Mysteries).

CHAPTER II

THE CREATIVE BEGINNING: JESUS ON KINGDOM AND CHURCH

INTO the pagan world such as we have described it Christ's religion came as the breath of a new life. "The time is fulfilled," said Jesus, "and the Kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark i. 15). In Christ's life, deeds, preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom, death and resurrection, the moveless foundations of the Church were laid.

I. The Church a Divine Institution.—This is contested on various sides.

(1) Many writers (*e.g.*, Baur¹) take as their starting-point the spirit of universalism in the age in which Christianity appeared. The age, they explain, was one stretching out in every direction towards universalism, and Christ's religion was but the natural unity of these elements characterising the thought and feeling of the time. It is, however, as vain to attempt to explain Christianity from simply natural causes, as it is to explain Jesus Christ, its Author, out of His times and

¹ *Church History of First Three Centuries*, i. pp. 1 ff. Pfleiderer proposes to study Christianity "as the normal outcome of the manifold factors in the religious and ethical life of the time" (*Primitive Christianity*, Introd.).

surroundings. To experience a need is one thing; to have the power to satisfy it is another. Even Baur does not attempt to show how all the factors which were at work in that groaning, travailing world—all that Judaism, Greece, Rome, the entire religious history of mankind, had to contribute—came to their unity and found their absolute expression in the single miraculous soul of Christ, while He was still infinitely more than them all.

(2) It has been argued again (*e.g.*, by Dr. Hatch¹) that it was no part of the design of Jesus to found a visible society such as is meant by a Church, but that the primitive communities took shape under the influence of the **general laws** which gave birth to kindred associations everywhere throughout Gentile society. Nothing, on the other hand, seems clearer to the ordinary reader of the Gospels than that Jesus from the first intended His disciples to unite in a society in which His Kingdom in the world should come to visible expression. This, indeed, is already implied in His preaching of a “Kingdom,” for undeniably, as has frequently been pointed out, a kingdom is more than a mere aggregate of individuals; it is a **community**, with a polity, laws, etc., under a ruling head.²

(3) As untenable is the view more recently maintained

¹ *Organization of the Early Christian Churches*, pp. 17 ff., 213 ff.

² Cf. Gore, *Ministry of Christian Church*, p. 10. Professor Seeley has said in *Ecce Homo* (chap. v.) : “To deny that Christ did undertake to found and to legislate for a new theocratic society . . . is indeed possible, but only to those who altogether deny the credibility of the extant biographies of Christ”.

that Christ's idea of His Kingdom in the Gospels is wholly eschatological, *i.e.*, belongs, not to time, but to the end of the world and to eternity (J. Weiss, Schweitzer, etc.). The Kingdom, doubtless, is regarded as perfected in eternity, but that it has a beginning and present being on earth seems, beyond question, involved in Christ's parables and much else in His teaching.

2. Christ's Teaching on the Kingdom.—In this connection reference falls specially to be made to the parables in Matthew xiii., known commonly as the **Parables of the Kingdom**. These form a series, describing, first, the origin of the Kingdom from the word (the Sower); second, the mixed character of the Kingdom in its earthly form (the Tares); third, the growth and development of the Kingdom, as (1) an external growth from small beginnings to great size (the Mustard Seed), and (2) an internal influence working in society (the Leaven); fourth, its priceless value, and the way in which individuals come into possession of it, (1) sometimes suddenly, as in the finding of hid treasure (the Treasure hid in a Field), or (2) as the result of long and painful search (the Pearl of Great Price); lastly, the ultimate separation of good and bad, and final glory of the Kingdom (the Tares, but specially the Draw Net). With these parables is naturally to be taken the parable in Mark iv. 26-29 of the Seed Growing Secretly, bringing the Kingdom before us as a power growing from within, and bound in its development to a law of rhythm and organic progress.

From these parables may already be deduced the marks

by which the Kingdom, in Christ's idea, is distinguished from current Jewish conceptions, while yet realising the higher ideals and anticipations of Old Testament prophecy. (1) *Its spirituality.* The new society which Jesus came to found is in its essence independent of the national forms of Judaism: indeed, of all national forms (*cf.* John xviii. 36, 37). The bond among its members is a faith, not civil government; a religion, not ties of birth, race, or nationality; ■ new relation to God, not earthly kinships. (2) *Its universality.* "The field is the world" (Matt. xiii. 38). This follows from the former. Universality is implied in all Christ's teaching regarding, and arrangements for, His Kingdom (*cf.* Matt. viii. 11; xxviii. 19, 20), and finds clear expression in a saying like that in John xii. 21; "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself". (3) It is a *growth from a life within*: hence its history implies a *gradual process*. It is a hasty inference from certain of the sayings of Jesus that He looked for the end of the world—the consummation of all things—as in the quite immediate future. Many things show that, in His thought, an interval of considerable duration must elapse before that final crisis arrived (world-wide evangelisation, maturing of good and evil, apostacies, persecutions, etc.).¹ In contrast with the judgments immediately impending on that generation ("these things," Matt. xxiv. 34), Jesus declares, "Of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven,

¹ Cf. Reuss, *History of Christian Theology in the Apostolic Age*, i., pp. 217-18 (E.T.); Bruce, *Kingdom of God*, chap. xii.

neither the Son, but the Father only" (ver. 36; *cf.* Acts i. 7).

In harmony with these marks of His Kingdom, Jesus emphasises repeatedly that His Kingdom is something radically new, and not simply a reformed and purified Judaism (*cf.* Matt. ix. 16, 17).

3. The Kingdom and the Church.—The Kingdom and the Church are closely related, yet the two are not to be immediately identified. The "Kingdom" is a wider conception than the "Church": it denotes the rule or supremacy of God in human hearts and human affairs in all man's relationships (family, civic, social, national, commercial, etc.), leaving nothing outside. "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth" (Matt. vi. 10). The "Church," on the other hand, may be described as the visible expression of that Kingdom on earth in the association of its members for directly religious ends—worship, witness and confession, preaching of the Gospel, mutual edification and fellowship, etc.¹ That it lay in the plan of Jesus to found such a society may surely be inferred from His action in the choice and training of apostles (Matt. x. 2 ff.; so Mark and Luke); from the instructions and commissions given to them (Matt. x. 1 ff.; xxviii. 18 ff.); from direct statements and rules laid down for discipline (see below); from the appointment of sacraments (Baptism, the Lord's Supper); from the

¹ Lange remarks on Matt. xvi. 18: "The Church is not the kingdom of heaven itself, but a positive institution of Christ by which, on the one hand, the kingdom of heaven becomes directly manifest in the world by its *worship*, while, on the other hand, it spreads through the world by means of its *missionary efforts*".

direction to wait for the promised outpouring of the Spirit (Luke xxiv. 49 ; Acts i. 4, 5).

While a Christian society is thus everywhere assumed, only in two passages in the first Gospel is the Church directly named. One is the famous passage, Matthew xvi. 18, where, after Peter's great confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus declares: "Thou art Peter (*Petros*), and upon this rock (*petra*) I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it". Then follows: "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," etc. (ver. 19). Without minute discussion it is evident, (1) that it is not Peter the individual, but *Peter the confessing apostle*, the spokesman of the Twelve, whom Jesus, with allusion to his name, speaks of as "rock"; and (2) that he is so in virtue of *the truth which he confessed*—that Jesus was divine Son and Messiah. The conflicting voices of the age previously recited (ver. 14) furnished no foundation on which a Church could be built; this confession of Peter's did (cf. Eph. iii. 20). The second passage, Matthew xviii. 17, directs, where remonstrance with an erring brother has failed, "Tell it unto the Church," and again powers of discipline are conferred (vers. 17, 18). In "binding" and "loosing," in these contexts (cf. John xx. 21-23), are implied, after Rabbinical analogy, powers of judicial exclusion and inclusion—of imposing or remitting sentences—but it is understood of itself that this authority is ever to be exercised genuinely in the name and spirit of Jesus, as a last resort, for manifest and unmistakable offences,

and with sincere prayer for guidance (vers. 19, 20). No sanction in heaven is promised to arbitrary, rash, or unjust judgments.

Points for Inquiry and Study.—Compare allusions in the Gospels to mistaken Jewish ideas of the Kingdom of God. Likewise note misapprehensions of the disciples which Jesus corrected. Distinguish different senses in which Jesus speaks of His “Coming”. Study the Sermon on the Mount for the ethical ideals of Christ’s Kingdom. Note allusions in Christ’s teaching to the universal scope of His Kingdom. Compare Christ’s words to Peter in Matthew xvi. 18 with Roman Catholic pretensions. Test Church ideals by the view of the Church as an instrument for carrying out the ends of the Kingdom of God.

Books: Reuss’s *Christian Theology of the Apostolic Age*; A. B. Bruce’s *The Kingdom of God*; J. Candlish’s *The Kingdom of God*; Bishop Gore’s *The Ministry of the Christian Church*; Seeley’s *Ecce Homo*; Art. “Kingdom of God” in Hastings’ *Dict. of Bible*.

CHAPTER III

THE APOSTOLIC AGE AND LATER JEWISH CHRISTIANITY

CHRIST's last injunction to His apostles was to abide at Jerusalem till they should receive "the promise of the Father" (Luke xxiv. 49; Acts i. 4, 5). In the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts ii.) the New Testament Church was born.

i. The Church of the Apostles.—Obvious reasons compel a glance at the phenomena of the Apostolic Age. Three main stages in the development may be distinguished :—

(1) The first takes us to the martyrdom of Stephen, and may be called the period of unbroken unity with Jewish institutions. The Church in this stage was composed wholly of Jewish believers, and was presided over by the apostles as a body. The first disciples stood in unbroken unity with temple and synagogue (Acts ii. 46; iii. 1).¹ Their specifically Christian fellowship expressed itself in domestic gatherings (chap. ii. 46). Even the apostles did not dream of parting with their national usages (*cf.* Peter's scruples, Acts x.), but probably thought of the Gentile mission to which they knew

¹ Much later Saul sought the Christians in the synagogues (Acts ix. 2).

themselves called (Matt. xxviii. 19 ; Acts i. 8 ; ii. 21, 39), as an incorporation into Jewish privilege. How long this naïve stage lasted is uncertain, but the need must early have been felt for more independent assemblies. This became imperative when, under the new impulse of love, the so-called "community of goods" was introduced (chap. ii. 44, 45). It is in connection with the judgment on Ananias and Sapphira that the word "Church" first occurs (chap. v. 11).¹ Even yet we must beware of attributing to these gatherings of the disciples too formal an organisation. Everything is as yet fluent, growing, unconstrained. The first mention of "elders" is in Acts xi. 30, and, doubtless, the analogy followed there was that of the Jewish synagogue.

The oldest definite step in organisation we read of was the appointment of **The Seven** (Acts vi.), called for by the disputes between Hebrews and Hellenists (Greek-speaking Jews) about the daily distribution. It is customary to see in these "Seven" the prototypes of the "deacons"; but it may be questioned whether the design went farther than to meet a particular emergency. Naturally, as believers multiplied, similar associations tended to spring up in the surrounding districts (Acts ix. 31 ; Gal. i. 22). These appear to have stood in a certain relation of dependence on the mother Church in Jerusalem.² But the distinction of Hellenist and

¹ Not in Acts ii. 47 ; cf. R.V.

² Even when so important ■ Church as that of Antioch was formed, it seemed the natural thing to send delegates to it from Jerusalem to look after its welfare (Acts xi. 22).

Hebrew had a farther influence, and one of greater importance. It lay in the nature of the case that the Hellenistic Jews were men of a freer, more cosmopolitan spirit than their Hebrew compatriots. From their circle came Stephen, the forerunner of St. Paul. It seems plain that Stephen had clearly grasped the principle that salvation by faith, and the spirituality and inwardness of Christ's religion generally, rendered obsolete the prescriptions of the law (Acts vi. 13, 14). His address in his defence turns throughout on this idea, that God's revelations are not tied to times and places, and that His worship is not necessarily bound up with these (chap. vii.). It was this that led to his martyrdom for blasphemy. It did not occur to anyone that he had left a successor in the young man at whose feet the clothes of the witnesses were laid, and who was the most clamorous for his destruction.

(2) The second stage extends from the martyrdom of Stephen to the Council of Jerusalem, and may be termed the period of the founding of the Gentile Churches. The birth of Gentile Christianity was not an event which took place all at once, or without being prepared for within the Church itself. The first barrier broken down was that between Jews and Samaritans (Acts viii. 5-8); a second was broken down when Philip sought and baptised the Ethiopian eunuch (chap. viii. 26-40); a third and greater one was removed when Peter was sent to Cornelius (chap. x.); the last was broken down when some men of Cyprus and Cyrene, likewise Hellenes, boldly struck into a new line, and began to preach the Gospel

to the Greeks at Antioch (chap. xi. 20, 21). This was quite a new departure. Previously, it is said, the word had been preached to none but Jews only (ver. 19); now it was preached to Gentiles, and a purely Gentile Church was founded. The special thing to notice is how the Church at Jerusalem received the tidings of these advances. It did so in a way worthy of it. It saw itself being led into new paths, but it was not disobedient to the heavenly vision (*cf.* viii. 14; xi. 18, 22, 23).

Meanwhile God had been preparing His own instrument for this work. The conversion of Saul is one of the most remarkable facts in history; one also the most far-reaching in its effects. "Pharisaism had fulfilled its mission for the world when it produced this man" (Harnack).¹ It is not an unlikely conjecture that the reason why Saul opposed the Christians with so unrelenting a hostility was that, with his powerful, consistent intellect, he saw more clearly than others that the logical consequence of this system was the utter overthrow of Judaism.² When, therefore, it pleased God to reveal His Son in him (Gal. i. 15), this was to him one and the same thing as the call to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. A prolonged retirement to Arabia was followed by a fifteen days' visit to St. Peter at Jerusalem; the next few years were spent in his native district (Gal. i. 17-21). Thence he was brought by Barnabas to help him at Antioch, where a powerful Church had been established, and the disciples had received the name

¹ *History of Dogma*, i. p. 94.

² Thus Baur.

by which they have since been known—"Christians" (Acts xi. 26).

From this point begins a new development. St. Paul and Barnabas are separated for a mission to the Gentiles (chap. xiii. 2). We need not follow the apostle in his **missionary journeys**. His progress is marked by light points, for it was a principle with him, neglecting outposts, to aim at the great centres. This enables us to trace him as he goes along—at Antioch in Pisidia, at Philippi, at Thessalonica, at Athens, at Corinth, at Ephesus—till finally his desire was gratified in a way he had not looked for, and he saw Rome also (Rom. i. 15; xv. 32). The conditions under which these Churches planted by St. Paul had their origin caused them to present certain peculiarities. (a) They were *free* to a greater extent than the Palestinian Churches from the *law* and *synagogue*; (b) they were mostly *mixed* Churches—composed in varying proportions of Jews and Gentiles; and (c) they were more completely *independent* than the Palestinian and Syrian Churches. The latter, it was noted, stood in a certain relation of dependence on the mother Church at Jerusalem. The only bond of union among the Pauline Churches was their consciousness of a common faith, and the personality of their great apostle, whose letters and travels from Church to Church kept them in touch with him and in connection with one another.

(3) The third stage extends from the Council of Jerusalem (inclusive) to the end of the apostolic age, and is marked as the period of the **great controversy**

between Jew and Gentile.¹ The Church in Jerusalem appears to have been considerably reinforced by the more conservative section (Acts vi. 7; xv. 5; xxi. 20). These had been content to be silent when it was only the case of one individual (the eunuch), or one family (Cornelius), or one Church (Antioch), directly under the eyes of their own delegates. Now (close of first missionary journey), the Gentile mission had been pushed far and wide, and there seemed a danger that their distinctive Jewish privilege would be altogether swamped. A **reactionary party** accordingly emerged, whose watchword was " Except ye be circumcised, ye cannot be saved " (chap. xv. 1, 5, 24). Their machinations at Antioch led to Paul and Barnabas being sent up to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem for a settlement of this question, and to the calling of the Great Council of Acts xv. The chief points to be noted are the entire agreement of the Jerusalem leaders with Paul on the main issue (thus also Gal. ii.),² and the broad basis on which the decision was arrived at—" The apostles and elders, with the whole Church " (chap. xv. 23).

¹ The theory of Baur and his school (Tübingen school), which makes the whole history of the apostolic age turn upon a supposed conflict of Petrine and Pauline parties in the primitive Church—the Petrine party being represented by the older apostles—may now be regarded as abandoned. Ritschl's book on *The Rise of the Old Catholic Church* (2nd edit. 1857, untranslated), in which he recanted his adherence to the Baur school, has valuable suggestions to which the above sketch is indebted. The truth of which Baur's view is an exaggeration appears in what is stated in this section.

² Some, as Ramsay, do not identify these visits.

The decision itself was of the nature of a compromise, but it left untouched a point of great importance for the future peace of the Church. The Jews were not to insist on circumcision; the Gentiles were to observe precepts (vers. 28, 29). But it was not settled whether *Jews* were at liberty to dispense with the customs of their nation. On this point real difference of opinion still existed.¹ St. Paul was probably the only one perfectly clear in principle; the majority of the Jewish believers took the other view. The difference was one which was bound to emerge in mixed Churches—especially in *eating*. Hence the collision of St. Paul and St. Peter at Antioch (Gal. ii. 11-14), which turned on this point. The question of principle, however, once raised, could only be settled in one way in the interests of the liberty and unity of the Church (*cf.* the Epistles of St. Peter and St. James, which lay not the slightest stress on the observance of the law of Moses—this though both are directly writing to the *Diaspora*). Still, as a matter of usage, the Jewish Christians continued to walk faithfully in the customs of their fathers (thus even St. Paul, Acts xxi. 24, xxviii. 17).²

It will be seen from this that the *Judaising* party which opposed St. Paul with so much bitterness in the Churches did not consist entirely of those who insisted on circumcision. This was the nature of the opposition in Galatia (Gal. v. 1-4; vi. 13, 14). But it would in-

¹ Thus Ritschl.

² Cf. the description of St. James (from Hegesippus) in Eusebius, *Hist.* ii., 23.

clude also those who, without insisting on the circumcision of the Gentiles, resented the abrogation of the law for Jews. This was probably the nature of the opposition at Corinth, where we do not read of any attempt to raise the question of circumcision, but of attacks on St. Paul's apostleship, and the attempt to form a Petrine in opposition to the Pauline party (1 Cor. i. 12; ix. 1). After this the controversy seems to have died down (a last trace in Phil. iii. 2). From this time St. Paul had to contend with mixed forms of error, in which legality had a place, but in association with Essenian and other heretical elements (*cf.* Colossians). By the time we reach the Gospel and Epistles of St. John we are moving in an atmosphere far above these oppositions, and find all antitheses resolved in the calm assurance of the possession of "eternal life".

2. Constitution and Worship of the Apostolic Churches.—Fresh light has been thrown on these subjects by the discovery and publication in 1883 of the *Didache*, or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*—probably a work of the end of the first century.¹ With respect to *constitution*, the chief gain in our knowledge is the distinction we are enabled to make between **ordinary** and **extraordinary** office-bearers.

The *ordinary* office-bearers are the **elders** (or bishops) and **deacons**. The facts may be thus exhibited: (1) Each congregation was presided over by a number of *elders* or *bishops* (Acts xi. 30, xiv. 23; Titus i. 5, etc.). With these were joined the **deacons**, who seem to have

¹ See Chap. iv.

served or assisted the elders in temporal matters. (2) Elders and bishops were *identical*. The names are interchangeable (Acts xx. 17, 28 ; Phil. i. 1 ; 1 Tim. iii. 1, 8 ; Titus i. 5, 7). There is no reason for supposing that the persons described more generally in 1 Corinthians xii. 28 ; 1 Thessalonians v. 12 ; Hebrews xiii. 8, etc., are other than the elders. (3) The elders had *spiritual*, and not merely administrative, functions.¹ They have oversight of the flock, watch for souls, speak the Word, pray with the sick, etc. (Acts. xx. 28 ; Heb. xiii. 17 ; 1 Pet. v. 2 ; James v. 15). (4) As in the case of "the Seven," election was popular (thus also *Didache*), with subsequent ordination (Acts vi. 5 ; 1 Tim. iv. 14, v. 22 ; Titus i. 5).

While this was so, there was a class of *extraordinary* office-bearers, to whom the work of teaching and exhorting more especially belonged. These were the **apostles and evangelists, prophets and teachers** (Acts xiii. 1 ; 1 Cor. xii. 28 ; Eph. iv. 11). They differed from the others in that their ministry was itinerant. The *Didache* gives minute directions regarding the apostles, prophets and teachers (chap. xi.-xiii.). Their support is to be voluntary. The apostle is not to tarry more than two days in one place. If any asks for money, he is a false prophet. The prophet may settle in a congregation and become what we would call its pastor. If

¹ This against Hatch. His conjecture that the designation "bishops" in Gentile Churches was suggested by the guilds connects itself with his idea that their functions were mainly financial or administrative.

prophets or teachers are absent, the bishops and deacons perform their service.

Besides this special and general ministry in the Church, there were cases in which the ordering of the affairs of the Church was put into the hands of specially appointed apostolic delegates—men like Timothy and Titus. Their position is probably to be looked on as deputed and exceptional, and adapted to the circumstances of a transition period (*cf.* 1 Tim. i. 3; Titus i. 5).

The above was the general constitution of the Gentile Churches, and the Jewish Churches in the main agreed with it. In one important respect, however, a different type was presented by the Church at Jerusalem. This Church, we saw, was presided over by the apostles, and took an oversight of the Jewish Churches in its neighbourhood. Afterwards its presidency was in the hands of James, the Lord's brother, who, from his personal pre-eminence and relationship to Christ, held practically apostolic rank. From this circumstance the idea seems to have grown up that the head of the Church at Jerusalem should be a blood relation of Christ; and, after St. James's martyrdom (*c.* A.D. 70), a cousin of the Lord, Symeon, was elected.¹ He held this position till his own martyrdom (*c.* A.D. 107). Soon after, in the reign of Hadrian, the Jewish Church in Jerusalem came to an end.

In its *worship*, as in its constitution, the Church was modelled partly on the usage of the synagogue. In Jewish-Christian, and even wider circles, the name

¹ Hegesippus in Eusebius, *Hist.*, iii., 11.

“synagogues” was long in use for Christian assemblies (*cf.* James ii. 2). What was new came from the freer spirit which Christianity introduced, and from the entrance of specific Christian ideas and observances. Chief among these new elements may be noted: (1) The new day of Christian service—the first day of the week, or Lord’s Day (Acts xx. 7; 1 Cor. xvi. 2; Rev. i. 10: thus also *Didache*). (2) The exercise of the spiritual gifts—tongues, prophesying, etc. (1 Cor. xii.). (3) The singing of Christian hymns (*cf.* Eph. v. 19). Fragments of these hymns are believed to be found in such passages as Ephesians v. 14; 1 Timothy iii. 16. (4) The reading of apostolic letters (Col. iv. 16; 1 Thess. v. 27). (5) The observance of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper (breaking of bread, eucharist).

Baptism, after Oriental custom, was administered generally, though not exclusively, by immersion. Another method was pouring, for which directions are given in the *Didache* (vii).¹ (*Cf.* the baptism of the Spirit by outpouring, Acts ii. 38; x. 46, etc.). The rite was administered on profession of faith—hence primarily to adults—and was frequently accompanied with spiritual gifts (*e.g.*, Acts xix. 16). Opinions differ as to the baptism of the children of believers. A class of cases may indicate that the Jewish analogy was followed of receiving the household with its head (Acts xvi. 15, 33; 1 Cor. i. 16; *cf.* 1 Cor. vii. 14).

The crowning act of the New Testament religious service was the Lord’s Supper, with which in this age

¹ Illustrated also in Catacomb pictures.

was always combined the *Agape*, or "love-feast". The two formed, indeed, one sacred meal, in the course of which, after blessing, bread was broken and wine drunk after the example of the Lord (1 Cor. xi. 23-34). Different types of observance may, however, be distinguished. In Gentile churches the service tended to be adapted to the freer model of the Greek feast (hence the abuses at Corinth, 1 Cor. xi.); in Jewish churches there was closer adherence to the ritual of the Passover. The eucharistic prayers in the *Didache* are on the latter model (chaps. ix.-x.). The directions do not include the words of institution; but these may be presumed to be presupposed.

3. Transition to later Jewish Christianity.—We have found two parties in Jewish Christianity—one an extreme **Pharisaic** party, who not only observed the law themselves, but would have imposed it on the Gentiles; the other, more tolerant and liberal, and friendly to the mission of St. Paul. A series of events now took place which had the twofold effect of (1) finally separating the Jewish Christian Church from the older Judaism; (2) finally separating the two Jewish parties—the stricter and more tolerant—from each other. Such events were:—

(1) The catastrophe of the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70). Warned, it is said, by a divine revelation (more probably mindful of the predictions of the Lord), the Christians had withdrawn to Pella, in the Decapolis, and there beheld the storm sweep over their doomed nation which wrought its overthrow. So awful a pro-

vidence could not but lead them to ponder anew their relation to a system which had thus perished, as it were, under the visible curse of God.

(2) The revival of **Rabbinism**, and increasing hostility of the Jews. The political fall, far from destroying Rabbinism, became the occasion of a great increase in its power (new centre at Jamnia, schools opened, court of justice established, etc). This stiffening and concentration of Judaism was accompanied by a bitterly intensified hostility to the Christians (Minim), who, repelled, cursed, persecuted by their brethren according to the flesh, were naturally influenced to ally themselves more closely with Gentile believers.

(3) Matters were brought to a crisis by the great rebellion under Barcochba ("Son of a Star"), in the reign of Hadrian (A.D. 132), when the refusal of Christians to enlist under the banner of the false Messiah exposed them to the worst cruelties. The revolt was followed by the erection on the site of Jerusalem (A.D. 135) of a new heathen city, *Ælia Capitolina*, from which by express decree all circumcised persons were excluded. The old Jerusalem Church was thus finally dispossessed, and a Gentile Church took its place, which served itself heir to its traditions and prestige.

4. Nazarenes and Ebionites.—The same causes which led to the separation of Jewish Christianity from Judaism proper led also to the separation of its two sections from each other. It is evident that the narrower of these sections, the old opponents of St. Paul, had never really grasped the essential nature of Christianity, and

were bound to become more reactionary as time went on. Even the more liberal section, who recognised the legitimacy of the Gentile mission, were necessarily hindered by their environment from attaining any large and worthy conception of the religion they professed ; and, cut off from the great developing body of Gentile Christianity, tended likewise to become a historical anachronism. This is what actually happened. Justin Martyr (c. A.D. 150) describes two kinds of Jewish Christians, one of whom did not wish, while the other did, to impose the law upon the Gentiles. The latter he already treats as heretical. Jerome (beginning of fifth century) knows of two classes distinguished by like peculiarities, whom he names respectively Nazarenes and Ebionites. Supplementing his statements by those of others, we gain the following points :—

The Nazarenes (oldest Jewish name for Christians, Acts xxiv. 5) were a sect small in numbers. Their chief seats were in Syria, about Pella, in Bashan, etc., where they lived among the Jews quite apart from the Gentile community. They held themselves, as Jews, under obligation to observe the law, but did not extend this obligation to the Gentiles, and recognised the mission of St. Paul. They used an Aramaic Gospel called the *Gospel of the Hebrews*, corresponding, with considerable changes and interpolations, to our Gospel of Matthew. They regarded Jesus as born of the Virgin Mary, and in a special way filled with the Divine Spirit, who came upon Him at His baptism. The Ebionites ("poor"), on the contrary, held the law to be binding on all,

and refused to have any fellowship with uncircumcised Gentiles. They bitterly calumniated St. Paul. Jesus they regarded as a mere man, chosen to be the Messiah for His legal piety. Their version of the Gospel omitted the story of the supernatural birth. The identity of the two parties with those formerly described seems as clear as it can be, and is not set aside by the fact that other Fathers (*e.g.*, Irenæus, Origen, Eusebius), to whom the Nazarenes were not well known,¹ group all under the common designation of Ebionites, attributing to them the views of the law proper only to the narrower section, while aware of the distinction in their views of Christ. Neither party had a future. The Ebionites were still numerous in the fourth century, but, as a sect formally rejected, seem to have melted away in the first half of the fifth century. The Nazarenes are not heard of after the time of Jerome.

5. Esselian Ebionitism—the “Clementines”.—The Ebionites above described are of the ordinary Pharisaic type. But Epiphanius (end of fourth century) is our authority for another type of Ebionitism, whose peculiarities are best explained by supposing a fusion, some time after the fall of Jerusalem, of Jewish Christianity with Essenism.²

An interesting monument of this party appears to remain in the so-called **Clementine writings** (*Recognitions* and *Homilies*), originating in the latter part of the

¹ Epiphanius and Jerome had first-hand knowledge of them. Augustine, like Jerome, looks kindly on the Nazarenes.

² Thus Neander, Ritschl, etc.

second century (possibly in the beginning of the third).¹ The titles do not designate distinct works, but denote divergent recensions or forms of the same work, which again embody older documents. In character the Clementines are a story or romance—an early instance of the religious novel—one, too, wrought out with no slight literary art. Clement, to whom the writings are attributed, is represented as the son of a noble Roman, whose wife and twin children had become lost, and who himself disappeared in seeking for them. The youthful Clement's mind is consumed with an ardent passion for truth. He meets with Barnabas at Rome (*Hom.*, Alexandria), and ultimately attaches himself to Peter at Cæsarea. Peter's great mission appears to be to follow Simon Magus (a supposed mask for St. Paul) about from place to place and counteract his influence. Clement is instructed by Peter, acts as his amanuensis, and sends accounts of his discourses, debates with the Magus, etc., to St. James at Jerusalem. In the course of their travels reunions are effected of all the members of Clement's family (mother, twin brothers, father)—hence *Recognitions*. This romance is the framework in which the theological ideas are skilfully set. The Ebionitism of the *Homilies* is the more pronounced, but the type of doctrine in both forms is similar. The key-thought is that of the one "true prophet," who, changing form and

¹ The first to mention them is Origen. The *Recognitions* exist only in a Latin translation; the complete Greek text of the *Homilies* was first published in 1853. There is also an *Epitome* of the *Homilies*.

name, goes down through the ages, appearing now as Adam, now as Moses, now as Christ. Christianity is thus the re promulgation of the eternal law. Over against Adam, as the true prophet, stands Eve as the bringer in of false or "female" prophecy, to which is attributed everything in the Old Testament false or unworthy of God. Sacrifice is rejected (in the *Recognitions* viewed as a provisional expedient; in the *Homilies* as a work of false prophecy). A remarkable feature in these works is that the point of circumcision is conceded (only baptism), and the Gentile mission itself is taken over from St. Paul, and claimed for St. Peter. The ecclesiastical system is that of second century episcopacy. In these circles the Lord's Supper was observed with *water* (Epiphanius).

Intimately connected with the Ebionites of the Clementines were the **Elkesaites**, who take their name from a supposed leader, Elkesai, in the reign of Trajan. It has been plausibly conjectured, however, that "Elkesai" ("hidden power") is rather the name of a *revelation book*,¹ with which this sect is always associated. This book, of whose origin mythical accounts are given, aimed at an amelioration of discipline by teaching a second forgiveness of sins through baptism. Unlike the Clementines, it insisted on circumcision. The whole movement appears to show a bold attempt to popularise a type of Ebionitism on Gentile soil, and within the Catholic episcopate. It met, however, with no permanent success.

¹ It was actively circulated in the third century.

Points for Inquiry and Study.—Read relevant sections of the *Didache*. On early constitution, read Lightfoot, Hort, and Hatch (see below). On gift of tongues, see Stanley's "Excursus" in *Commentary on Corinthians*.

Books.—Conybeare and Howson, Lewin, and Farrar on *St. Paul*; Ramsay's *St. Paul the Traveller*; Bartlet's *Apostolic Age*; Lightfoot on "Christian Ministry" (in *Philippians*); Hort's *Christian Ecclesia*; Hatch's *Organization*; Lechler's *Apostolic and Post-Apostolic Age*; Gore's *Ministry of Christian Church*; Schaff's *The Oldest Church Manual*; Lindsay's *The Church and Ministry in the Early Centuries*.

CHAPTER IV

GENTILE CHRISTIANITY: NERO TO DOMITIAN (A.D. 64-96)

THE indications in the New Testament of a rapid progress of the Gospel are filled out by traditions of the labours of the apostles after their dispersion from Jerusalem (Thomas in Parthia, Thaddæus in Edessa, Andrew in Scythia, etc.), often untrustworthy, but in their main features bearing out an early extensive diffusion of Christianity throughout the countries of the known world. Corroboration will be found in the facts now to be recited.

I. First Contact with the Empire.—The world has rarely seen more perfect specimens of human wickedness than in the series of emperors who succeeded Augustus. “The dark, unrelenting Tiberius” (Gibbon) was followed by the mad Caligula, and he by the dull, sottish **Claudius** (A.D. 41), to whose reign belongs the first distinct notice we have of the presence of Christianity in the empire. The historian Suetonius relates that **Claudius** “banished from Rome all Jews, who were continually making disturbances at the instigation of one *Chrestus*”. This is the banishment referred to in *Acts xviii. 2* (A.D. 52). There is little doubt that “*Chrestus*” is a misspelt name of “*Christ*,” and that

what Suetonius alludes to is tumults in the Jewish quarters which had arisen through the preaching of Christ. This is six years before the Epistle to the Romans (A.D. 58), and shows how remarkably Christianity had already spread in the capital (*cf.* Rom. i. 8, and Tacitus below). In A.D. 54 Claudius was poisoned to make way for his stepson, Nero, in whom every vice that tongue can name seemed concentrated. Under Nero happened what is usually reckoned as the **first persecution**, though this mode of enumerating persecutions is in many ways misleading.

2. The Persecution under Nero.—One night (A.D. 64) Rome was discovered to have been set on fire by an unseen hand. The fire spread with terrible rapidity till ten out of fourteen quarters of the city were destroyed. Popular suspicion fastened this crime on Nero, and he, to avert odium from himself, turned it on the Christians. A frightful persecution ensued. An “immense multitude” were convicted, not so much, as Tacitus confesses, on evidence of having set the city on fire, as on account of their “hatred of the human race”. To the most exquisite tortures were added mockery and derision. Some were covered with the skins of wild beasts, and thrown to be devoured by dogs; others were crucified; numbers were burnt alive; and many, covered with pitch, were lighted up when the day declined, to serve as torches during the night.¹

¹ “At the stake they shine,
Who stand with throat transfixed, and smoke and burn.”

—*Juvenal.*

The emperor lent his own gardens for the spectacle, and heightened the gaiety of the occasion by games. The persecution was local, but so terrible an event occurring in the capital could not but have the most serious consequences affecting the status and treatment of Christians in the provinces (*cf.* 1 Peter and Apocalypse).

Apart from its inherent pathos, the persecution yields instructive light on the rapidly growing numbers of the new sect, and on the estimate in which they were held by the pagans. When even an intelligent writer like Tacitus can speak of them as universally detested, and deservedly punished for their crimes, and of their religion as a "pernicious superstition," it is easy to imagine how the ignorant and unreasoning crowd must have thought and felt regarding them! It was not only into the lower strata of society, however, that Christianity had penetrated. We have at least one interesting case in this reign to show that it had found its way into higher circles as well. Tacitus relates that in A.D. 57 a very distinguished lady, *Pomponia Græcina*, wife of Aulus Plautius, commander of the army in Britain, was accused before her relatives of having adopted a "foreign superstition," which led her into habits of seclusion and melancholy. This "foreign superstition" has been generally understood to be Christianity; and the discovery of a crypt in the catacombs connected with the Pomponian *gens* (one descendant bearing this very name, *Pomponius Græcinus*), puts the matter beyond doubt.¹

3. Martyrdom of St. Paul and St. Peter.—To this

¹ See further below, p. 49.

reign of Nero, according to the concurrent testimony of antiquity, belong the martyrdoms of the two great apostles—St. Paul and St. Peter.

That St. Paul suffered at Rome, having carried the Gospel “to the extreme limit of the west,” is attested by Clement (A.D. 96); and is indeed evidenced by his own latest epistle (2 Tim.), which anticipates a speedy death by the sword of the executioner. Clement’s language favours the supposition that he did not meet this fate at the end of the imprisonment recorded in Acts xxviii. 30, 31, but had a new period of activity, journeying perhaps as far as Spain (*cf.* Rom. xv. 28). His second imprisonment is probably to be regarded as an after effect of the terrible persecution already described. His trial seems to have had two stages. He himself writes pathetically that at his first answer or defence he could get no one to act as his patron or advocate (2 Tim. iv. 16)—a testimony to the general terror Nero’s recent acts had inspired. He suffered, tradition says, on the Ostian Road, probably A.D. 67 or 68.

To the same period must be assigned the martyrdom of his brother apostle—St. Peter. The fiction of St. Peter’s seven years’ episcopate at Antioch and twenty-five years’ episcopate at Rome (source in the *Clementines*¹ and in apocryphal Acts) may be disregarded. On the other hand there is a consensus of testimony to the fact that St. Peter came to Rome in the end of his life,

¹ In an epistle prefixed to the *Homilies* Peter is represented as transferring his episcopate to Clement.

and suffered martyrdom about the same time as St. Paul. This we may accept as the historical nucleus round which embellishments of legend subsequently gathered. The story of St. Peter desiring to be crucified with his head downwards is first found in Origen (beginning of third century). Most beautiful of the legends about St. Peter is the well-known *Quo Vadis* story (fourth or fifth century). Peter was fleeing from the city when he met the Lord carrying His Cross. "Lord," he asked, "whither goest Thou?" "I go to Rome," said Jesus, "to be crucified again." Smitten with the rebuke, St. Peter turned back to prison and to death.

4. The Empire till Domitian.—From Nero to Domitian, the next emperor who concerns us, is thirteen years (A.D. 68-81). In this short interval no fewer than five emperors were raised to the purple. The reigns of three of them (Galba, Otho, Vitellius) were compressed in the brief space of eighteen months. **Vespasian** and **Titus** were good rulers. Their names are connected with the Jewish war and the destruction of Jerusalem. On the death of Titus (A.D. 81), not without suspicion of poison, the empire was taken by Domitian, Vespasian's younger son. Historians say he took Tiberius for his model. His moroseness, dissimulation, cruelty of disposition, are dwelt on by all who speak of him. Under him took place what it is customary to call the **second persecution**.

5. The Persecution under Domitian.—Domitian began as a precisian, but ere long developed qualities which made him what Pliny calls "the enemy of all

good men". His rapacity and lust of blood found a fitting prey in the Christians. Clement (A.D. 96)¹ speaks of "a vast multitude of the elect" who suffered for Christ, and gives vivid glimpses of the indignities they endured. An interesting story is told by Hegesippus,² of two grandchildren of Jude, the brother of the Lord, whom Domitian caused to be brought before him, but dismissed as simpletons on finding that they had no money, and expected only a celestial kingdom. A more remarkable instance in every way is that of **Flavius Clemens**, the consul, and his wife, **Domitilla**, who, the heathen historian Dion Cassius informs us, were in this reign (A.D. 96) accused of "atheism," and "going after the customs of the Jews". These two persons were of the highest rank. Clemens was the cousin, Domitilla the niece, of the emperor, and their two sons had been adopted by Domitian as his heirs. Yet Clemens was put to death, and his wife was banished to an island in the *Æ*gean. The peculiarity of the charge implies Christianity, and this is now confirmed by the discovery of the cemetery of Domitilla in the catacombs. So near even in that early age had Christianity come to the throne of the Cæsars! Dion further relates that "many others" were put to death or had their goods confiscated on the same charge, and instances **Acilius Glabrio**, who had been consul with Trajan, and whose family was one of the most illustrious in the state.³ In 1888 the crypt of the Glabriones, in the catacombs, was

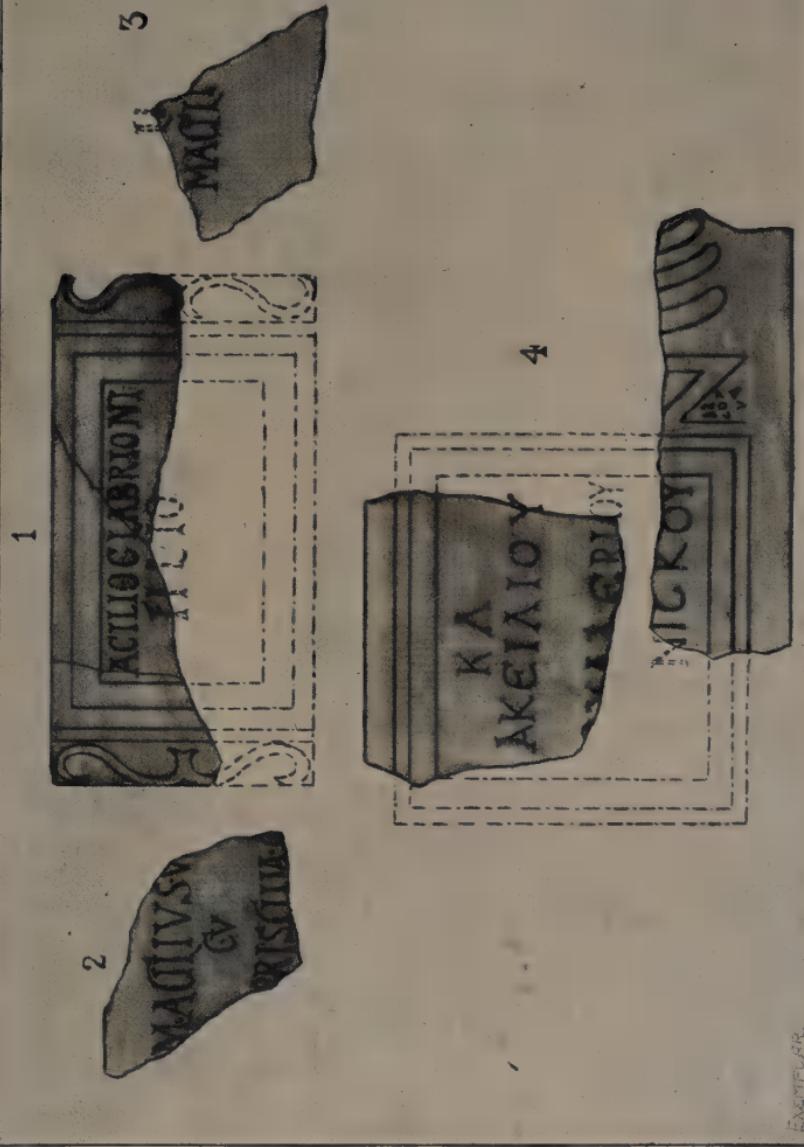
¹ See Chap. v.

² In Eusebius, iii., 20.

³ On this family see Lanciani (*op. cit.* at end, p. 5).

INSCRIPTIONS FOUND IN THE HYPOGEUM OF THE ACILII, CATACOMB OF PRISCILLA.

(For Explanation, see Appendix II.)



likewise laid bare by De Rossi. Other discoveries show that Christianity had penetrated deeply into the family of the Flavians.

6. Last Days of St. John.—To this reign also, if the oldest witnesses are to be trusted, is to be referred the banishment of the apostle John to Patmos,¹ and the composition of the Apocalypse. It is in any case to the period after Nero we must assign St. John's removal to Asia Minor, and his labours and teaching in Ephesus, of which there is ample attestation. Here, surrounded by a circle of friends and disciples, he continued to an extreme old age, his residence broken only by the banishment above mentioned. Among those about him in his later days we have notices of the apostles Philip and Andrew, of Polycarp, of a second John (the "Elder"), and of other "elders," who continued his tradition. Ephesus, in short, in the closing years of the century, became the new centre of the Church, as Jerusalem had been earlier, and Rome was to be later.²

As St. John grew old, tradition relates, his friends gathered round him and besought him to write down what he had taught about Christ. Thus his gospel originated. There seem to have been two editions of it, if we may judge from the supplementary chapter xxi., itself attested by a note from the elders (vers. 24, 25). Many beautiful stories remain to us of St. John's later

¹ Tacitus tells us, with evident reference to this reign, that the islands were filled with exiles, and the rocks stained with murder (*Hist.*, i., 2).

² Cf. Lightfoot, on "The Later School of St. John," in *Essays on Supernatural Religion*.

days, how, for instance, when too weak to repair to church, he caused the young men to carry him thither, and, being unable to speak much, contented himself with saying, "Little children, love one another" (Jerome); or the fine story told by Clement of Alexandria of his reclaiming the young man who had become a robber.¹ St. John's life is said to have extended into the reign of Trajan, *i.e.*, beyond A.D 98. His tomb was shown in Ephesus.

7. The Catacombs.—Reference has been made to the catacombs. These singular excavations are immense **subterranean burial-places** of the early Christians, in the fields around Rome, near the great roads, within a circle of three miles from the city. They began in the first century, probably as private burial places in the vineyards or gardens of the wealthier converts. The older cemeteries, which formed the nucleus of the catacombs, can in this way in several instances be distinguished. These smaller burial-places, as the excavations proceeded, ran into each other, and formed the larger areas.

The extent of the catacombs is enormous. They consist of a vast maze or labyrinth of passages, often in descending levels, intersecting each other in all directions, with little rooms or vaults on either side. The total length of the passages is reckoned at some 587 geographical miles. These corridors with the accompanying chambers are literally packed with graves. The number of the dead interred in them has been variously estimated, but can hardly be less than 2,000,000. This

¹ See the story in full in Godet's *Introduction to St. John's Gospel*.

fact speaks volumes for the extent to which Christianity had spread in and around Rome during the three centuries or thereabouts that the catacombs were in use. The oldest cemeteries, as those of Lucina (Pomponian), of Domitilla, of Priscilla, etc., are distinguished by their architectural elegance and classical style of decoration.

Special interest attaches to the art-features, symbols and inscriptions of the catacombs. They make large use of painting. The oldest tombs exhibit this art in its highest perfection. Afterwards painting becomes conventional, and often, as in the pictures which stand for Noah in the Ark, Jonah and the fish, etc., sinks well-nigh to the ridiculous. The Biblical representations embrace scenes from both Old and New Testaments. The figure of the Good Shepherd appears from the very first, and there are early representations of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The symbols of the catacombs bear striking testimony to the circle of ideas in which the Christian mind moved, and to the hopes by which it was sustained. They are of all kinds, from rudest scrawls to carefully-executed designs. Most were Biblical, a few pagan (Orpheus, etc.). Favourite symbols were the anchor, the dove, the lamb, the ship, the palm, the crown. The cross is not early. Chief among emblems, on account of its mystical significance, was the *fish*. It finds its explanation in the fact that the letters of the Greek name *ichthus* stand for the first letters of the names of Christ—"Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Saviour". Like the symbols, the inscriptions are often rude in style, but show also how differently death, and

everything connected with it, was looked upon in Christian as compared with pagan circles. The inscriptions are marked by a rare simplicity—often no more than “in peace”—but breathe always the spirit of hope, trust, and charity towards others. There is about them nothing horrible or revengeful. The tools of labour are portrayed, but not the instruments of torture. They speak to the power that *overcomes* death. The catacombs were long lost to knowledge: were rediscovered by Bosio in 1578; and were carefully explored in the last century by De Rossi and his coadjutors.

Points for Inquiry and Study.—Read Suetonius and Tacitus on Nero and Domitian (Tacitus on Domitian in *Life of Agricola*). Test the grounds of St. Peter’s alleged Roman Episcopate (cf. Barrow’s *Supremacy*). Illustrate from the New Testament the penetration by the Gospel of the upper ranks. Collect the legends of the later life of St. John (cf. Godet). Read Browning’s *Death in the Desert*. Study further the testimony of the catacombs.

Books.—On the history, Merivale’s *Romans under the Empire*; Farrar’s *Early Days of Christianity* and story *Darkness and Dawn*; Lightfoot, as above, on “The Later School of St. John” in *Essays*; Lanciani’s *Pagan and Christian Rome*; Northcote & Brownlow’s *Roma Sotterranea*; Withrow’s *Catacombs*; Orr’s *Neglected Factors in the Study of the Early Progress of Christianity* (deals with numerical progress, spread of Christianity in higher circles, etc.); Harnack’s *Expansion of Christianity*.

CHAPTER V

THE AGE OF THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS (A.D. 96-117)

WITH the mild Nerva, after the murder of Domitian (A.D. 96), begins the series of what are sometimes known as "The Five Good Emperors". Nerva was succeeded (A.D. 98) by the frank and soldier-like Trajan, under whom we reach, as ordinarily reckoned, the third persecution.

1. The Persecution in Bithynia—Pliny and Trajan.—

A correspondence preserved to us between Pliny and the emperor serves as a flashlight to reveal the extraordinary progress made by Christianity in certain parts of Asia Minor in the beginning of the second century.

Pliny at the time (A.D. 112) was proconsul of the extensive province of Bithynia-Pontus. So widely spread was Christianity in this province that the temples were almost deserted, the sacred rites had long been suspended, and sacrificial victims could scarcely find purchasers. Persons of all ages and ranks, and of both sexes had embraced the new "superstition". Informations had been laid before the proconsul, and numbers of Christians had already been put to death. The test applied was to offer wine and incense before the images of the gods and emperor, and to revile Christ. The multi-



THE EARLY CHURCH

tude of the persecutions involved Pliny in doubt as to how he should act, and he referred to the emperor for direction. Trajan's reply in effect was that he was not to look for cases, or receive anonymous informations, but if Christians were brought before him and proved obstinate, he was to punish them. If this letter of Trajan afforded Christians a measure of protection, in other respects it was a distinct **worsening** of their position. Hitherto Christians had fallen only under the general laws of the empire; now they were, so to speak, singled out as a party definitely proscribed. Their illegal standing was directly affirmed. Henceforth the very *name* of Christian sufficed to condemn them. On the other hand, Pliny's letter is a powerful vindication of the Christians. Investigation, even under torture, had demonstrated that their proceedings were perfectly innocent, and that all that could be charged against them was (as Pliny judged of it) an absurd and extravagant superstition.

The letter throws valuable light also on the worship of the time. The Christians met, it is told, on a "stated day" (Sunday) before daybreak, sang a hymn to Christ as God, and bound themselves by an oath (the pledge of the Supper?) to abstain from every kind of crime; in the evening they reassembled to eat a harmless meal (the *Agape*, now separated from the Supper). This latter meeting they discontinued after Pliny's prohibition. Not without reason has this remarkable epistle been called "the first apology for Christianity".

2. Martyrdom of Ignatius—The Ignatian Epistles.—

Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, is the first martyr-hero of whom we have a definite account. The often-told story of his condemnation by Trajan, his dialogue with the emperor, his play upon the word *Theophoros* (God-bearer), etc., is derived from old "Acts," and is imaginary. All we really know of the martyr is drawn from his own much-controverted Epistles. The Middle Ages were familiar with an enlarged and interpolated edition of twelve epistles. In 1644 Ussher brought to light a shorter Latin edition of seven epistles, and the Greek texts of these was discovered soon after (six by Vossius). This corresponds with the number known to Eusebius. In 1845 a yet shorter Syriac edition of three epistles, much abbreviated, was discovered by Cureton; but opinion has now fairly well settled down in favour of the seven Vossian epistles as the genuine Ignatius. From these we glean that Ignatius was tried and condemned at Antioch (c. A.D. 110), not by the emperor but by the governor, and was sent across Asia Minor under the care of ten guards ("leopards," he calls them) to Rome, to be thrown to wild beasts. The road to Smyrna, where a halt was made, divides into two, a northern and a southern. The martyr was taken by the upper route, but the Churches along the lower route were asked to send delegates to meet him at that city. The Church of Smyrna at the time was presided over by the holy Polycarp.

This brings us to the origin of the epistles. Before leaving, Ignatius wrote letters to the Churches along the lower road (*Ephesians*, *Magnesians*, *Trallians*); one

also to the *Romans*, breathing an ardent desire for martyrdom. The remaining three letters (*Philadelphians*, *Smyrnæans*, and a personal one to *Polycarp*) were written from *Troas*, the next important halting-place. He passes thence to *Philippi*, and this is the last glimpse we get of him. The call at *Philippi*, however, was the occasion of obtaining for us another valuable relic of the period in the *Epistle of Polycarp* (see below), to whom the *Philippians* had written, asking for copies of the martyr's letters.¹ In due time *Ignatius* would arrive at *Rome*, would be delivered into the proper custody, then when the fête-day came would be led into the blood-stained arena, to meet his death at the jaws of the beasts, amidst the roar of thousands of delighted spectators. His epistles are his legacy—and his photograph. Of warm Syrian temperament, eager and impetuous, a born "impeller of men," yet consumed with a passionate devotion to Christ, which made him not count his life dear to him if, at any cost, he could "attain" to union with His Lord, he is to all ages the typical "Martyr."

3. The Literature of the Period—The "Apostolic Fathers."—The name "Apostolic Fathers" is given to a number of writings whose authors were believed to be, in the strict sense, apostolic men, *i.e.*, either contemporaries (*e.g.*, *Clement*, *Barnabas*, *Hermas*) or disciples (*Polycarp*, *Ignatius*) of the apostles. This use of the designation is now abandoned. No one pretends to find in each of the authors of these writings direct personal

¹To this is probably due the collection of these letters.

relationship with the apostles. In another respect, however, these writings are fitly grouped together. They all emanate from the sub-apostolic age, and represent the thought and feeling of a period in regard to which they are nearly the only Christian monuments we possess. Incomparably inferior to the writings of the New Testament (a fact which the authors themselves were fully aware of), they have yet many beauties and a distinct interest. Leaves and scraps of a lost literature—for such they really are—they are far from lacking in variety of subject and style.

At the head of the list stands the *Epistle of Clement* to the *Corinthians* (A.D. 96).¹ The author, formerly, but mistakenly, identified with the Clement of Phil. iv. 3, is the same who appears in the early lists as the third of the Roman bishops (Linus and Anacletus being the first and second), whose fabulous history is given in the *Clementines*.² The occasion was a revolt of the Corinthian Church against certain of its elders, which had issued in their forcible expulsion from office. Clement writes in name of the Roman Church to urge concord and submission to authority. The tone is one of "sweet reasonableness," yet in parts there is a note of imperiousness, which Dr. Lightfoot not unfairly regards as prophetic of future claims to domination. The

¹ The dates are approximate only. The complete Greek text of Clement, and of the so-called second Clement, was discovered by Bryennios at Constantinople (1873) in the same volume from which the *Didache* was afterwards published (1883).

² Some scholars would identify him with Flavius Clemens, but on insufficient grounds.

epistle is an early witness to St. Paul's (first) letter to the Corinthians, in which the apostle also dissuades from contentions. Its closing chapters (59, 60) are a prayer of a distinctly liturgical character. The so-called *second epistle of Clement* is really an ancient homily or sermon—the first of the kind we possess.¹ Its date may be about A.D. 130-40. It is a simple edifying production, with here and there a touch of ultra-spiritualising. A peculiarity in it is the quotation of several sayings of our Lord from an apocryphal source² (chaps. 4, 5, 12).

A third writing, the so-called *Epistle of Barnabas*, derives its name from the belief that it was the production of the companion of St. Paul. Internal evidence entirely negatives this supposition. The epistle was written after the destruction of Jerusalem (to which event it alludes), and bears a strongly anti-Judaic character. Yet it is of very early date (A.D. 70-100). Its literary peculiarities suggest that it emanated from Alexandria. It is marked by excessive fondness for allegorising, and by a far-fetched, fanciful style of treatment generally. It aims at imparting a higher "knowledge" (*gnosis*) in the mystical interpretation of types (e.g., Abraham's 318 servants, chap. 9; clean and unclean beasts, chap. 10). Both Barnabas and, in a slighter degree, Hermas (below) incorporate matter found in the earlier chapters of the *Didache*—thus raising an interesting literary problem.

The *Shepherd of Hermas* is our oldest allegory. It

¹ It seems to be a *read* exhortation.

² Possibly the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, see chap. vi.

has been fitly called the *Pilgrim's Progress* of the early Church. It was held in the highest repute in the Church; is spoken of even as "scripture" (Irenæus, Origen). The author was at one time identified with the Hermas of Romans, xvi. 14; but this is now abandoned. An early notice makes him the brother of Pius I., Bishop of Rome (A.D. 140-155). He speaks of himself, however, as a contemporary of Clement of Rome (chap. 4), and the simplicity of the Church order in the book agrees with this earlier date (c. A.D. 100). Hermas, according to his own account, was the slave of a Roman lady, named Rhoda, who set him free and showed him many kindnesses. His book consists of three parts—Visions, Mandates, and Similitudes. The chief figure in the Visions is the Church, represented by a venerable lady, who appears younger in each new vision. In the last Vision the Saviour appears as a Shepherd (hence the name), and bids him write down the commandments and parables He would give him. The Mandates show acquaintance with the *Didache*. The Similitudes remind one of Bunyan's Interpreter's House. They contain ten parables, and give their interpretations.

The Epistles of Ignatius (A.D. 110) have already been described. Their chief interest is in their bearings on the origin of Episcopacy (see below). Allusion has also been made to the origin of the Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians (A.D. 110), a beautiful letter, remarkable in a critical respect for the use it makes of 1 Peter and 1 John, and for the authentication it gives to St. Paul's epistle to the same Church. One of the finest of all the

post-apostolic writings is the **Epistle to Diognetus**, which, though it really belongs to the next period (c. A.D. 150), is best taken here. It found its way into our list from the belief that its author was a disciple of the apostles; then was long attributed to Justin Martyr. The Diognetus to whom it is addressed may not improbably have been the tutor of Marcus Aurelius of that name. It combats idolatry, defends theism, and gives a strong and clear presentation of evangelical truths. One thought dwelt on is the cosmopolitan character of Christianity. "What the soul is in the body, that Christians are in the world."

The "Didache," or "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" (one of the most valuable "finds" of later years) has been before us in an earlier connection. It is in part a book of moral instruction, in part our oldest work on Church order (baptism, eucharist, offices). The literary relations with Barnabas and Hermas can best be explained by supposing that both the *Didache* and Barnabas work up material from an older source—a moral treatise on "the two ways" ("there are two ways, one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between the two ways"), which, in that case, must go back to apostolic times. The book in its present form may be dated about A.D. 100.

There remain certain fragments of **Papias**, Bishop of Hierapolis. Papias was a man of weak judgment, but a diligent collector of traditions about the sayings of our Lord. He wrote a work in five books entitled *An Exposition of Oracles of the Lord*, sometimes alleged to

have been still in existence in 1218 at Nismes. This, however, appears to be a mistake.¹ Eusebius gives from it well-known extracts on the authorship of two of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark). Papias was martyred about the same time as Polycarp (c. A.D. 155).

4. The Theology of "The Apostolic Fathers."—The writings above-named have little independent theological worth, but are valuable as reflecting the state of mind in the early Church ere theological reflection had yet well begun. The descent from the full and vigorous presentation of doctrine in the apostolic epistles is very marked. There is plentiful use of Scriptural language, but often little real insight into its meaning. As if to efface past differences, and emphasise **Catholicity**, there is a studious linking together of the names of St. Peter and St. Paul as of equal honour and authority. But the sharp edges are taken off the thoughts of both, with the result that we have what has been called an *average* type of doctrine,² in which common features are retained, and distinctive features tend to be lost.

The **Christology** of these writings is in the main strong and clear. It follows the lines of New Testament teaching on the pre-existence, deity, incarnation, and true humanity as well as true divinity of the Son. Hermas has been thought to be an exception, but his ninth Similitude, in which he compares Christ to a "rock" and a "gate"—a "rock" because it is old (so the Son

¹ There is apparently a confusion with a later Papias of the eleventh century.

² Thus Ritschl,

of God is older than all creation, and was the Father's adviser in creation), and a "gate" because it is new (so He was made manifest in the last days that we may enter the Kingdom of God through Him), should clear him from this imputation.¹ On the *Doctrine of Salvation* there is greater vagueness. In some of the writings the evangelical note is feeble and hardly discernible (*Hermas, Didache*), in others it is remarkably pronounced (*Polycarp, Epistle to Diognetus*). By most stress is laid on the blood-shedding, the sufferings, the death of Christ, as the medium of cleansing and redemption, but there is no attempt at explanation. Pauline phraseology is used, but the Pauline thought is generally blunted, and, under the conception of Christianity as a "New Law" (*Barnabas, Hermas, Didache*), there is a tendency to obscure the relation of faith and works, and to lay a one-sided emphasis on obedience as the condition of salvation. Forgiveness is connected with Baptism; the rule after that is obedience, and good works (*e.g.*, alms-giving) aid repentance in the covering of sin. "Alms-giving removeth the burden of sin" (*2 Clem. 16*).

In *Eschatology*, besides retaining the ordinary elements of apostolic doctrine (resurrection, return of Christ to judgment), most of the Fathers seem to have been millenarians, *i.e.*, held the doctrine of 1,000 years' reign of Christ upon the earth (*Barnabas, Papias; Didache* speaks of first resurrection). This doctrine, especially

¹ Professor Harnack makes *Hermas* a representative of an "adoptionist," in contrast with a "pneumatic," type of Christology. There is a tendency in *Hermas* to confuse "Son" and "Spirit".

when bound up with material and sensuous elements, as in Papias, is named **Chiliasm**. The punishment of the wicked is viewed as eternal ("For after we have departed out of the world, we can no more make confession there, or repent any more," 2 *Clem.* 8).

5. The Ignatian Episcopacy.—We are brought at this stage face to face with the question of the origin of Episcopacy. Two sets of facts meet us:—

(1) A large body of evidence exists to show that, in the sub-apostolic age, in the Churches of the West at least, the constitution was not essentially different from that which earlier prevailed. The Churches are ruled by elders *or* bishops and deacons, and there is no hint of any higher office. Thus, in Clement's *Epistle*, elders and bishops are still the same persons, and these, with deacons, are the only office-bearers recognised. This is evidence for both Rome and Corinth. The writer, afterwards called Bishop of Rome, makes no claim of the kind for himself. The testimony of *Hermas*, likewise emanating from Rome, is to the same effect. *Hermas* knows only of bishops who are also elders. The names are interchangeable. The *Didache* bears the same witness, "Choose for yourselves bishops and deacons." A higher order is unknown. Ignatius, in his *Epistle to the Romans*, fails in any reference to a bishop existing in that city similar to the bishops in Antioch, Smyrna, Ephesus, etc.¹ This, in so strenuous

¹ Dr. Gore, therefore, oversteps the evidence when he says, on the strength of a rhetorical expression of Ignatius, that Ignatius knows of "no non-episcopal area."

an upholder of episcopacy shows that even in his time there was still no monarchical bishop in Rome. Polycarp's *Epistle to the Philippians* bears testimony of the same kind for Philippi. There was still in that Church no office higher than the apostolic bishops and deacons.

(2) When we turn to the remaining *Epistles of Ignatius* different conditions confront us. It will be observed that the evidence under this head relates to the Churches of a defined area—**Syria and Asia Minor**. We find not only a bishop for each Church distinct from the presbyters (elders), but the most extravagant exaltation of the office of the bishop. The bishop is as God, and the presbyters as the council of God. Or the bishop is as Christ, and the presbyters are as the council of the apostles. The presbyters are to be attuned to the bishop, as the strings of a lyre to the lyre. The great thing is to be united with the bishop. Without the bishop it is not lawful to baptise or celebrate the eucharist. There are here, therefore, as clearly three grades of office-bearers—bishops, presbyters, and deacons—as formerly there were two. Other evidence confirms the testimony of these epistles. We have Polycarp, *e.g.*, at Smyrna, Papias at Hierapolis, etc.

How, now, is this state of things to be accounted for? By apostolic authority? or by the operation of natural causes, elevating the episcopate from the presbyterate? It is important, in answering this question, to look precisely at the nature of the Ignatian Episcopate. Distinction must be made between the facts to which Ignatius witnesses and the theory he holds. Ignatius

was firmly persuaded that in exalting the power of bishops he was taking the best means of securing the peace and unity of the Church. But it does not follow that bishops had yet all the power he claimed for them. The very vehemence of his advocacy implies that they had not. When facts are calmly considered, it is surprising to discover how little affinity, after all, the Ignatian bishop has to the bishop of the developed episcopal system. (1) He is a purely *congregational*, not a *diocesan* bishop. Each several Church—Antioch, Smyrna, Ephesus, Tralles, etc.—had its own bishop, who, in this respect, differs little from the modern “pastor.” (2) He makes no claim to *apostolical succession*. There is no hint of this in Ignatius. Had the idea existed, so keen a defender of episcopacy could not have passed it over. (3) He has no *sacerdotal functions*. “There is not throughout these letters the slightest tinge of sacerdotal language with reference to the Christian ministry” (Lightfoot). This should be decisive as to the ideas of the age in question. Such are the facts—a government by presbyters in the Churches of the West; a form of congregational episcopacy in Asia Minor and Syria. By the middle of the second century all the Churches would seem to have advanced to the Ignatian stage.

How did the change come about? The theory of a direct appointment of bishops, as a third higher order, by the original apostles is no longer tenable in view of the above. Dr. Gore, accordingly, would supplement the action of the original apostles by that of “apostolic

men"—such apostles and prophets as we read of in the *Didache*. We cannot doubt, he thinks, that one of these prophets settling down in a Church would become its bishop (pastor?). Apart, however, from the objection that the functions of prophets and bishops were distinct, this, even if admitted, would cover only a fragment of the facts. We have seen that even at the beginning of the second century leading apostolic Churches had no one-man bishop, and it is pure assumption that the bishops of all other Churches owed their origin to the "settling down" of travelling prophets. There is not a word of this in Ignatius.

There remains the possibility that the system, however introduced, had the sanction of apostles—at least of the apostle John (Lightfoot). Clement of Alexandria has a statement that St. John went about from place to place establishing bishops and organising Churches. The fact can neither be proved nor disproved, for Clement may well be reading back into John's action a meaning from his own times,¹ and we have no clue to the nature of the bishops (a plurality² or single). In any case this is hardly an account of the *origin* of the system. Of that the simplest explanation is probably the truest. The president of the Council of Elders (*primus inter pares*), as the official representative of the Church, having the ordinary direction of business, the

¹ Dr. Gore says about Tertullian that we have to acknowledge "a little idealising" in his statements about the apostolic institution of the episcopates at Corinth and Philippi (p. 336).

² Thus Ritschl.

conduct of public worship (a sort of archisynagogos),¹ and generally an outstanding man, would naturally acquire a position of prominence in distinction from the other elders. Times of stress and trial, such as came to the Church after the death of the apostles, when tendencies to disintegration and schism were rife, would powerfully strengthen his authority. The need of the time was good leaders, strong and stable government, wise direction. Under these circumstances, episcopacy, such as we know it in Ignatius' day, may well have arisen without the assumption of any apostolic interpolation.

Points for Inquiry and Study.—Follow out the traditions and traces of the early progress of Christianity. Read the legend of Ignatius' trial. Read Clement's appeal for concord drawn from creation (20), also the final prayer (59, 60). Read the vision of the shepherd in Hermas (v.). Read chapters 5 and 9 in *Epistle to Diognetus*. Collect the passages on Christ's passion and its effects in this group of writings. Show the equivalence of bishops and elders in Clement, Hermas and Polycarp.

Books.—Pressensé's *Early Years of Christianity*; Farrar's *Lives of the Fathers*; Ramsay's *Church in the Roman Empire*; Orr's *Neglected Factors*; Lightfoot's (or other) translation of *Apostolic Fathers*; Donaldson's *Apostolic Fathers*; Hatch's *Organization*; Lightfoot's *Essay* on "Ministry"; Lindsay's *Church and Ministry*.

¹The "angel" of the Book of Revelation (ch. ii. 1, 8, 12, etc.) might find his analogue here. But it is doubtful if an individual is meant at all.

CHAPTER VI

THE AGE OF THE APOLOGISTS (A.D. 117-180)

THE period of the **Apologists** is covered by the three remaining names in our list of the "Good Emperors." They are Hadrian (A.D. 117-138), Antoninus Pius (A.D. 138-161), and Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 161-180). The period is marked externally by intermittent, but severe persecution of the Christians, and by the commencement of written attacks on Christianity; internally by the rise of **apology**, and the development of **Gnosticism** and **Montanism**. Despite persecution, the remarkable progress of the Church is continued.

1. Hadrian and Antoninus Pius.—The attitude of the versatile emperor Hadrian, in whose reign written apology began (see below), was on the whole not unfavourable to Christianity. There is, however, evidence that both in his reign and that of his successor, though no formal persecution is reckoned, the Christians were continually exposed to harassment and outbreaks of violence. A rescript of the emperor to Fundanus, the proconsul of Asia, whose predecessor had written much as Pliny did, to ask direction, forbids him to receive irregular accusations or to yield to popular outcry. If Christians

are proved to break the laws,¹ they are to be punished, but libellers are to be punished still more severely.

Hadrian nominated to succeed him Antoninus, better known (from his dutifulness in insisting on the deification of Hadrian) as **Antoninus Pius**. With him was associated during his reign of twenty-three years his nephew, Marcus Aurelius. Antoninus was, however, the acting and responsible emperor. His clemency, uprightness, and affableness of disposition are the praise of all historians. His reign has commonly been regarded as free from the stain of persecution. This is a mistake, though probably the emperor himself was not to blame. It is doubtful whether he is the Antoninus who, when proconsul of Asia, after some Christians had been condemned, and when the rest in great numbers presented themselves at his tribunal, said: "Miserable men, if ye desire to die, have ye not ropes and precipices?" (Tertullian). But the two *Apologies* of Justin Martyr, and his *Dialogue with Trypho*—all of this reign—are indubitable evidence that Christians were everywhere objects of hatred and persecution, and had to endure losses, tortures, and death for their religion (e.g., *Dial.*, 110; specific cases in 2 *Apol.*, i. 2). Melito of Sardis, another apologist, speaks of numerous edicts issued by Antoninus (e.g., to the Larissæans, Thessalonians, Athenians) forbidding the cities to take new measures against the Christians. This shows that the emperor both knew of these per-

¹ It is a moot point whether breaking the laws here means more than the mere proof that one was a Christian.

secutions, and, in accordance with his humane character, took steps to check their violence.

2. The Martyrdom of Polycarp.—We have, however, one undoubted instance of martyrdom in this reign, the details of which, preserved in a contemporary narrative, throw light upon the whole. Polycarp of Smyrna has already been before us in connection with Ignatius. Of his earlier life we know little. He was eighty-six years old at the time of his martyrdom (A.D. 155) : so may have been born A.D. 69 or 70. He was a disciple of St. John, in Asia Minor, and often repeated to the youthful Irenæus (who was *his* disciple) the things he had heard from the apostle.¹

The account of his martyrdom is given in a beautiful and affecting letter of the Church of which he was bishop. The great festival of Asia was being held at Smyrna. Some cause had aroused the fury of the populace against the Christians. The Jews are specially mentioned as active in the persecution. Several Christians had already perished amidst dreadful torments, when the cry went up, “Let search be made for Polycarp”. Polycarp at first concealed himself, then, on his retreat being discovered, surrendered himself to the will of God. On the way to the city he was taken up into the chariot of the captain of police, who, with his father, urged him to recant. Failing in their object, they thrust him out with violence. Arrived at the stadium, he was interrogated by the proconsul, “Swear by the genius of Cæsar ; say, Away with the Atheists!” Polycarp

¹ On his visit to Anicetus, the Roman bishop, see below, p. 123.

carp, looking to heaven, said, "Away with the Atheists!" "Revile Christ," urged the proconsul. "Fourscore and six years have I served Him," was the memorable reply, "and He hath done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?" The herald proclaimed, "Polycarp hath confessed himself a Christian," and the cry rose to have a lion let loose on him. But the games were ended. The shout then was that he should be burned alive. Polycarp, at his own request, was only bound, not nailed to the stake. It seemed for a time to the wondering bystanders as though the fire refused to touch him. To end the scene, an executioner was ordered to stab him.¹ The poor malice of the Jews frustrated even the desire of the brethren for possession of his body, which was consumed. The bishop's death stopped the persecution, and probably sent many home to think, with the consequence that they became Christians too. Such, at least, we know to have been a frequent outcome of these martyrdoms (Justin, *Dial.*, 110; 2 *Apol.*, ii. 12).

3. The Age of the Antonines—Marcus Aurelius.—Marcus Aurelius is the classic representative of his age. Vespasian, in the previous century, had instituted a salaried hierarchy of teachers—rhetoricians, grammarians, philosophers—by whom the Roman people was to be lectured into wisdom and virtue. The result was a species of ethical, philosophical, and even religious

¹ The legendary feature of a "dove" issuing from his side is not in the oldest version (Eusebius), and is probably a corruption or interpolation.

revival in the empire. Paganism had its itinerant preachers (*e.g.* Dion Chrysostom, Maximus of Tyre), whose orations or harangues were the counterparts of the Christian sermons. These tendencies came to a head in the reign of Marcus Aurelius. For once in the world's history, Plato's dream of a state which had a philosopher for its ruler, and was governed by philosophic maxims, seemed about to be realised.

Personally, Marcus is justly reckoned one of the noblest characters of heathenism. His "*Meditations*" embody the highest ideal of stoical morality, in union with a firm confidence in a rational ordering of the world, characteristic of the later Stoicism. Yet it is the stoical, not the Christian ideal. It lacks the tenderness, humility, dependence, benignity, hopefulness of the Christian temper. Between Christianity, with its confession of sin and moral weakness, and Aurelius, with his philosophic self-sufficiency, passive resignation, stern suppression of passion, and cheerless fatalism, there could be nothing but antagonism. There is but one allusion to Christianity in the *Meditations* (xi. 3), and it breathes the iciest contempt. Marcus, too, if a Stoic, was a devoted Roman, fixed in his determination to maintain the established institutions. His character was not without its strain of superstition,¹ and it is noted of him that in his latter years his melancholy disposition grew upon him, and he became peculiarly zealous in heathen rites. It is scarcely wonderful, therefore, that, even under this paragon of emperors, "Christian blood flowed more freely

¹ See Froude, Renan, Merivale, Uhlhorn, etc., noted at end.

than it had flowed any time during the previous half century"—that "in fact the wound was never staunched during his reign" (Lightfoot). To him is ascribed what we are accustomed to reckon the fourth persecution.

4. Persecutions under Marcus—The Martyrs of Vienne and Lyons.—There is one story told of Marcus which, if it could be believed, would clear his memory in part of the stain of persecution. It is the story of the Thundering Legion. Tertullian and others relate that in one of his campaigns the army was in extreme distress from thirst. The Christian soldiers of the twelfth legion prayed, and, in answer to their prayers, copious showers of rain fell, and a violent storm drove away the enemy. Appended to Justin's first *Apology* is an alleged epistle from the emperor to the senate, ascribing his deliverance to the prayers of the Christians, and commanding that they be no more molested. Unhappily the epistle is not genuine. It seems certain that the deliverance took place, only the heathen attributed it, not to the prayers of the Christians, but to the interposition of their own gods. In the pagan account Marcus is represented as stretching his hands to heaven, and invoking Jupiter.

The positive evidences of persecution in this reign, and of the emperor's implication in it, are not few. At Rome itself there is the case of Justin Martyr and his six companions, who suffered under the prefect Rusticus (a tutor of Aurelius) about A.D. 163-66.¹ The emperor could hardly have been ignorant of this case. There

¹ See below, p. 77.

is the testimony of Melito of Sardis (*c. A.D. 170*) to a very severe persecution in **Asia Minor**. He speaks of God's servants being persecuted as they never were before by "new edicts" which gave the property of Christians to their accusers. Melito professes to doubt whether these edicts emanated from the emperor, but the doubt can only be assumed for the purposes of his appeal. A proconsul would not issue such "edicts" on his own responsibility. Even the heathen Celsus, who wrote in this reign (see below), speaks of Christ as banished from **every land and sea**, and of His servants as bound and led to punishment, and put upon the stake (Origen, viii. 39).

But the chief persecution we know of, which stands out with the distinctness of a limelight picture in its blending of the horrible and the sublime, is that of the Churches of **Vienne and Lyons** in Gaul. It was a case in which Marcus Aurelius was expressly consulted, and gave his sanction to what was done. The account of it is contained in a circular epistle addressed by the Churches¹ to their brethren in Asia and Phrygia—"the pearl of the Christian literature of the second century," Renan calls it. Lyons and Vienne were two cities of Gaul where the Rhone and the Sâone join. Lyons was a great seat of Cæsar-worship, and the place of the annual meeting of the Gallic deputies in council. The persecution was in A.D. 177, in the midst of the closing troubles of Marcus's reign. It began with acts of mob-violence; then the prominent persons of the

¹ Possibly written by Irenæus.

two Churches were arrested, and dragged with clamour and insult before the tribunals. Tortures beyond description were applied to the Christians to make them confess to secret crimes, but without effect.

Four names stand out, conspicuous for heroism and constancy—*Sanctus*, a deacon from Vienne; *Maturus*, a recent convert; *Attalus*, from Pergamos; above all, *Blandina*, a slave girl, whose mistress was also one of the martyrs. *Blandina* was torn and mangled almost beyond recognition without extorting from her more than the words, “I am a Christian; there is nothing vile done among us.” The aged Bishop *Pothinus* (ninety years old) was dragged before the judgment seat, and there so cruelly maltreated that, when cast into prison, he lingered only two days. *Irenæus* succeeded him. A new round of torments was devised for the others—mangling by wild beasts, roasting in an iron chair, etc. *Blandina* was suspended on a stake and exposed to the attacks of wild animals. But they refused at this time to touch her. *Attalus*, a Roman citizen, was reserved till Cæsar’s pleasure should be known.

The final scene of the martyrdom was on the day of the great festival. The emperor’s reply had come, ordering that such as confessed themselves Christians should be put to death. All who proved steadfast were brought forth to punishment. The Romans were beheaded; the rest were taken to the amphitheatre. Again the round of frightful torture was gone through. *Attalus*, as a specially notable Christian, was, despite his Roman citizenship, roasted in the chair. *Blandina* her-

self, after renewed manglings and burnings, was enclosed in a net and given to be tossed by a bull. Thus, last of all her company, she perished. The knell of slavery was surely rung when scenes like these could be enacted! The rage of the people wreaked itself even on the lifeless remains of the victims. To prevent resurrection they burned them, and scattered the ashes in the Rhone. What strikes one in the pathetic narrative of these sufferings is its tone of calm sobriety—its utter absence of boasting, or spiritual pride, or over-eager desire for martyrdom. Other religions have their martyrs—but have they martyrs like these?

5. The Rise of Apology.—The rise of a written apology for Christianity in this age is a fact of great significance. It shows that Christianity had entered literary circles; shows also the growing boldness of the Christians, and their confidence in their ability to refute calumny and vanquish prejudice by an openly-reasoned statement of their case. They had the world against them; but their invincible reliance was on the power of truth. They were ready to lay down their lives as heretofore; but they would not let the world remain in blindness as to the nature of the religion it assailed. They set themselves to vindicate Christianity; to expose also the folly and immorality of the pagan idolatry by which it was opposed.

The apologetic literature of the second century, therefore, is both voluminous and rich. It covers a wide area in space. Its authors are men of culture and learning, skilled reasoners, many of them philosophers by

profession, who, at the cost of their worldly prospects, put their talent and eloquence at the service of the religion they had espoused. It breathes throughout a tone of **dignity** and **lofty conviction**, and must have been a powerful factor in aiding the progress of Christianity it so strikingly describes. Such an apology was demanded, if by nothing else, by the **slanders** in circulation about the Christians, and almost universally believed (cannibalism, promiscuous immorality, worship of ass's head, etc.). The refutation of these charges is complete. Scarcely less effective is the reply to the charges of impiety and disloyalty; while the exhibition of the truth and reasonableness of Christian doctrine, and of the purity and simplicity of Christian worship and morality, is heightened by the dark background of heathen irreligion and vice against which it is cast. The apologists may be grouped as those belonging to the reign of Hadrian (Quadratus, Aristides), those of the reign of Antoninus (Justin, Tatian), and those of the time of Marcus Aurelius (Athenagoras, Theophilus, Melito, Minucius Felix, etc.). Tertullian and Origen belong to the next period.

6. The Earlier Apologists—Justin Martyr.—The oldest apologist, **Quadratus**, is little more than a name to us.¹ He addressed an apology to the Emperor Hadrian (Athens, A.D. 125-26?), of which only a single extract is preserved. He lays stress upon the Saviour's **miracles**. The other apologist of this reign, **Aristides**, was, till

¹ Possibly he is identical with Quadratus, an evangelist mentioned by Eusebius (iii. 37).

lately, even more completely unknown. It was only known that he was a philosopher of Athens, and had also presented an apology to Hadrian (A.D. 125-26). In 1889, however, a complete Syriac version of this apology was brought to light¹ (two Armenian fragments earlier). Then the remarkable discovery was made that scholars had this apology all the while, and were not aware of the fact. In a famous mediæval romance, *Barlaam and Josaphat*, an apology for Christianity is put into the mouth of one of the characters. This turns out to be substantially the apology of Aristides, of which the Greek text has thus been obtained. The apology is mainly a defence of theism against the errors of paganism, and a powerful vindication of Christian morality. It testifies to the existence of a written Gospel. A third writer, *Aristo of Pella*, reputed author of a lost dialogue between a Christian (Jason) and a Jew (Papiuscus), may belong to the end of this reign. The work is before or about the middle of the century.

Greatest of all the apologists of this period whose works have come down to us is *Justin the Martyr*. From him we have two *Apologies*, addressed to Antoninus Pius and the Roman Senate (c. A.D. 150), and a *Dialogue with Trypho*, a Jew, a little later in date. Other writings attributed to him are of doubtful genuineness or spurious. Justin was a native of Flavia

¹ The discovery was made by Dr. Rendel Harris, in the Convent of St. Catherine, Mount Sinai. An inscription in the Syriac version puts the apology under Antoninus, but the ordinary date seems preferable. The author knows the *Didache*, or the work on which it is based.

Neapolis (Sychem) in Samaria. In the introduction to his *Dialogue* he narrates the manner of his conversion. He had gone from one philosophical school to another in search of truth. A conversation with an old man whom he met on the seashore directed him to the Scriptures and to Christ. He became persuaded that here was the only sure and worthy philosophy, and, still wearing his philosopher's cloak, thenceforth set himself to impart to others the light he had obtained. We find him at Ephesus and Rome teaching and disputing in his double capacity of philosopher and Christian. His disputes brought him into collision with one Crescens, a cynic, who plotted his death and that of his disciples. Through the machinations of this man, or in some other way, he and six companions were apprehended. Brought before the prefect Rusticus, they were condemned to death by decapitation¹ (A.D. 163-66).

Justin's first apology is in the main a nobly conceived and admirably sustained piece of argument. It consists of three parts—the first refuting the charges against the Christians, the second proving the truth of the Christian religion, chiefly from prophecy,² the third explaining the nature of the Christian worship. The second apology was evoked by a specially shameful instance of persecution under Urbicus the prefect. The *Dialogue with Trypho* is the account of a long disputation at

¹ The "Acts" of this martyrdom are accepted as reliable.

² The apologetic argument from prophecy would need to be wholly recast in the light of modern knowledge; yet the Scriptures chiefly relied on are those which the Church has always accepted as in a true sense Messianic.

Ephesus with a liberal-minded Jew, and meets his objections to Christianity.

Incidentally, Justin's writings throw valuable light on many matters of importance, as, *e.g.*, on the existence and use of the canonical Gospels, called by him the "Memoirs of the Apostles" (*1 Apol.*, 66-7; *Dial.*, 10, 100, 103), on the victorious spread of Christianity (*Dial.*, 117),¹ and on the details of the Christian weekly service (*1 Apol.*, 65-7). The picture of the last is singularly life-like and minute. The day of worship, as in Pliny, is Sunday, the service is under the direction of a "president" (not even yet by Justin called a bishop), the reading of the Prophets and the Gospels is an established part of the service, the president delivers a "homily" or discourse, the congregation rise at prayer, and respond to the prayer of the president with an "Amen," the eucharist is celebrated at the close of the prayer after sermon (the *agape* probably in the evening), the distribution is made by the deacons, who take portions to the absent, after the eucharist offerings are made for the poor, the sick, prisoners, etc.

The other apologist of the reign of Antoninus is Tatian, an Assyrian by birth, and disciple of Justin's. He afterwards fell into Gnostic heresy.² Tatian's apologetic work is an *Address to the Greeks* (A.D. 150), learned, but bitter, biting, and contemptuous in spirit.

¹ The catacombs too attest this, and show that Christianity had entered the highest ranks (*e.g.*, cemeteries of Praetextatus and Cæcilia). See *Neglected Factors*, p. 132 ff.

² See chap. vii.

He is better known through his famous *Diatessaron*, or "Harmony of the four Gospels," the recovery of which in its complete form in an Arabic translation is one of the sensations of recent years.¹ This finally establishes the character of the "Gospels" described by Justin as in use in the Churches.

7. Later Apologists.—The apologists of the reign of Marcus Aurelius can be more rapidly enumerated. The first, *Athenagoras*, was, like Aristides, a philosopher of Athens. He is the most polished and classical in style of all the apologists. His apology, entitled an *Intercession for the Christians* (A.D. 177), is chiefly devoted to the refutation of the charges against the Christians (atheism, eating human flesh, immorality), and is a piece of calm, reasonable, effective pleading. He wrote also a work on the *Resurrection*. *Theophilus*, Bishop of Antioch, belongs to the severe school of apologists. He wrote an apology in three books addressed to his friend *Autolychus* (c. A.D. 180). He can see no good in the philosophers and poets, whose errors and contradictions he shows up in detail. The few grains of truth he finds in them were stolen, he thinks, from the Hebrew prophets. He has some forcible chapters on the purity and beauty of the Christian morality. *Theophilus* is the first to mention the Gospel of St. John by name. The Gospel itself, of course, was in use long before. It was included, e.g., in

¹ Published in 1888. A Latin reproduction of an Armenian translation of the Syriac commentary of Ephræm Syrus on the Harmony was published in 1876.

the *Diatessaron* of Tatian. Melito, Bishop of Sardis (c. A.D. 170), has been quoted on the edicts of emperors. His apology to Marcus Aurelius is known only from extracts. It is characteristic of the age that, in addressing the emperor, he speaks of the new religion as “our philosophy.” Melito wrote numerous other works. To him we owe also the first Christian list of the Hebrew Scriptures, *i.e.*, of the Old Testament canon. Hermias, date uncertain, wrote *A Mockery of Heathen Philosophers*, still extant. The title explains the character of the work.

Other writers, whose apologetic works are lost, were Apolinarius, Bishop of Hierapolis (c. A.D. 174), and Miltiades, the former the author of *Five Books against the Greeks*, addressed to the emperor, the latter of an apology addressed *To the Rulers of this World*, with other treatises. Finally, there is the beautiful and able book of the Latin apologist Minucius Felix. There is a doubt, indeed, whether this work should be placed here, or later, after Tertullian; but the presumption is strong in favour of the earlier date. Fronto, *e.g.*, who wrote against the Christians in this reign (see below), is spoken of as a contemporary. The piece itself is in the form of a dialogue between Octavius and a heathen Cæcilius (friends of Minucius, a Roman advocate)—hence its title *Octavius*. Cæcilius states the case for the old faith and Octavius replies. The intrinsic worth of the book is enhanced by its high artistic and literary merit.

8. Other Writers.—A passing allusion should be made to two other writers of note in this age—Hegesippus,

who wrote five books of *Memoirs* some time between A.D. 175 and A.D. 189; and **Dionysius**, Bishop of Corinth (c. 170), whose fame rests chiefly on his pastoral epistles, of which he wrote a great many. The works of both are lost, but Eusebius has preserved valuable extracts. The *Memoirs* of Hegesippus were not history in the strict sense, but appear to have been a collection of reminiscences of the apostolic and post-apostolic ages, drawn partly from written, partly from oral sources, in part also from the writer's own observation. The author was extensively travelled, and the information he had to convey would, if we possessed it, be extremely useful.

9. The Literary Attack on Christianity.—No sketch of the literature of this period would be complete which, besides a survey of the apologists, did not include some reference to the literary opposition to Christianity. It is another testimony to the growing importance of Christianity that the age which saw the rise of a formal Christian apology saw also the beginnings of a formal literary attack of exceptional skill and keenness. The earliest of the literary assailants we know of was **Fronto**, tutor of **Marcus Aurelius**, who published an oration in which he reiterated the scandalous charges brought against the Christians. His argument is conjectured by **Renan** to be nearly textually embodied in the discourse of **Cæcilius** in the *Octavius* of **Minucius Felix**.

A more formidable assailant was **Celsus**, whose *True Discourse* (c. A.D. 180) was the subject of **Origen's** later classical refutation in his *Eight Books against Celsus* (A.D. 249). **Celsus** is probably to be identified with an

(alleged) Epicurean of that name, an able literary man, and friend of Lucian, who wrote also against magic. Of wide reading and undeniable acuteness, he spares no pains to damage and discredit the Christians, while acquitting them of the graver calumnies that were current. He first introduces a Jew to gather up the slanders of the synagogue; then in his own name subjects the Gospel history and beliefs of the Christians to criticism and ridicule from the standpoint of the true philosophy. Everything in Christianity—particularly its doctrine of redemption—is an offence to him. It is not too much to say of his work that, relatively to its age, it was as trenchant an assault as any that has since come from the artillery of unbelief. Yet, as far as can be seen, its influence was *nil* in stopping the triumphant march of Christianity. Its obvious unfairness, and utter insensibility to the holy love and power of the Christian religion, deprived it of all effect on minds that knew from experience what Christianity was.

Another typical opponent of Christianity in this age was the sceptical and witty **Lucian of Samosata**, a born hater of shams, but withal cynical and heartless in his judgments on men and things. In his *Peregrinus Proteus* he describes how a cynic charlatan succeeded in imposing on the Christians, and was made the object of their lavish kindness when in prison for his faith. Yet the picture he draws of the attentions of Christians to their unfortunate brethren, intended to cover them with ridicule, in reality redounds to their highest honour. Only Lucian was not the man to see this!

Points for Inquiry and Study.—Read the original narratives of the martyrdom of Polycarp and of the martyrs of Vienne and Lyons (Eusebius, Lightfoot). Note indications in the latter of the social rank of the victims, and compare catacomb testimony (Orr). Compare more fully the ethics of the *Meditations* with the morality of the Gospel. Study the character of Marcus on its *Roman* side. Read Justin's account of his conversion and of the Christian worship. Analyse the *True Discourse* of Celsus (Pressensé), and account for its failure. Classify the principal branches of second century apology.

Books.—Merivale, Pressensé, Uhlhorn, Farrar, Orr, etc., as before; Cape's *Age of the Antonines*, in "Epochs" series; Froude's "Origen and Celsus," "A Cagliostro of the Second Century," "Lucian," in *Short Studies*; Renan's *Marcus Aurelius*; Long's *Thoughts of Marcus Aurelius*; *Diatessaron*, etc., in additional volume of "Ante-Nicene Library"; Lightfoot on "Tatian's *Diatessaron*" in *Essays*.

CHAPTER VII

THE AGE OF THE APOLOGISTS (CONTINUED)— GNOSTICISM AND MONTANISM (A.D. 117-180)

THE external conflict of the Church in this period was with paganism. Its *internal* conflicts were with **Gnosticism** and **Montanism**. The conflict with Gnosticism reacted powerfully on the development of theology; the conflict with Montanism did much to strengthen the bands of ecclesiastical authority. But the apologists also, from the nature of their task, had to state and defend Christian doctrines, *i.e.*, to theologise. They are our first theologians. They form the link between the Apostolic Fathers, whose theology is as yet naïve and unreflective, and the later Church teachers, with whom the construction of a system of Christian truth has become a distinct and conscious aim (*e.g.*, Origen).

1. The Apologists ■■ Theologians.—It is usual in recent years to speak of the apologists as teachers of a rational theology (a doctrine of God, virtue, immortality), which misses the distinctive essence of Christianity—to which Christianity is related only as revelation and supernatural attestation. There is colour for this judgment, but it is one-sided and defective. From the necessity of their position, the apologists dealt chiefly

with the truths of what we may call "natural religion"—the unity and moral government of God, the creation of the world, judgment to come, a future state of rewards and punishments, etc.—and sought to emphasise these in opposition to pagan idolatry, stoical pantheism, epicurean indifferentism, and belief in fate. If they gave these doctrines a rational dress, this is explained by their training and habits as philosophers, and by accommodation to the spirit of the age. It would have been out of place in reasoning with pagans to have discussed the interior doctrines of the Christian religion about which the pagans knew and cared nothing (*cf.* St. Paul, Acts xvii. 23-31; xxiv. 25).

But the doctrines taught are Christian doctrines (in contrast with Greek and other speculations), and are treated in their Christian aspects and relations. The morality also is the spiritual morality of the Gospel. The apologists, one and all, held strongly to the doctrine of the Trinity, and in this connexion gave prominence to the doctrine of the **Logos** ("Word"), the Father's instrument in the creation of the world, who became incarnate in Jesus Christ. This too is Scriptural doctrine. It is to be noted, however, that, while holding Son and Spirit to be truly of the nature of God, they fell short in one important respect of the doctrine of the later creeds. Assuming in some sense an eternal distinction between the Logos and the Father, they yet seem to have believed that the coming forth of the Son (Spirit also) into distinct personal existence (as second "Person" of the Trinity) was *not* eternal, but was immediately

prior to creation, and with a view to it.¹ The Logos ("Word") was held to be the source of all rational intelligence and wisdom in men (*cf.* John i. 4, 9), and what portions of truth heathen sages possessed were due to His presence in their minds. In Christ the *whole* Word was incarnate; hence in Him Christians have the full truth (Justin). The apologists are witnesses to Gospel facts and hopes—Justin especially. From the writings of Justin a great part of the Gospel history can be reproduced.²

Further, while most of the apologists confine themselves to the general ("rational") truths indicated above, Justin has something to say of the specific Christian doctrines. Man through disobedience is become the child of necessity and ignorance, and has fallen under the tyranny of the demons (*1 Apol.*, 10, 54-61, etc. The heathen world generally is viewed as ruled by the demons). Jesus by His sufferings and death has redeemed us from the curse, and obtained remission of sins for those who repent, believe, and keep His commandments (*e.g.*, *Dial.*, 94-6). Forgiveness is bestowed in Baptism, which is spoken of as "regeneration" (*1 Apol.*, 61, 66, etc.). The sacramentarian idea is thus already well established. A mystical virtue, in like manner, attaches to the bread and wine of the eucharist, which are no longer "common food and drink," but the flesh and

¹ Tertullian, who here ranks with the apologists, says: "There was a time when God had no Son" (*Fuit tempus, cum deo filius non fuit.—Against Hermog.*, 2).

² Cf Westcott's *Canon of N. T.*, pp. 91 ff.

blood of Jesus Christ, through which our own flesh and blood are nourished (1 *Apol.*, 66). Still it is true that Justin regards Christianity, in accordance with the temper of the time, too much as "a new philosophy" and "a new law."

2. Gnosticism—Its General Character.—Gnosticism is the peculiar heresy of the second century. It is one of the most remarkable appearances of any age. It may be described generally as the **fantastic product** of the blending of certain Christian ideas—particularly that of redemption through Christ—with speculations and imaginings derived from a medley of sources (Greek, Jewish, Parsic, Oriental; philosophies, religions, theosophies, mysteries) in a period when the human mind was in a kind of ferment, and when opinions of every sort were jumbled together in an unimaginable welter. It involves, as the name denotes, a claim to "**knowledge**"—knowledge of a kind of which the ordinary believer was incapable, and in the possession of which "**salvation**" in the full sense consisted. This knowledge of which the Gnostic boasted related to the subjects ordinarily treated of in religious philosophy; Gnosticism was a species of **religious philosophy**. Such questions were the relation of infinite and finite, the origin of the world and of evil, the cause, meaning, purpose and destiny of things, the reason of the difference in men's capacities and lots, the way of salvation, etc. Imagination ran riot in inventing solutions of these problems, and as the answers which would satisfy the Gnostic had no real relation to Christianity, and could not by any

rational process of interpretation be educed from Scripture, they had to be drawn from it by applying to the sacred text the method of allegory.

It is difficult to give an intelligible account of systems so multiform and continually changing ; and hardly any features can be named common to all systems. The following may serve as a general indication. At the head is the ultimate, nameless, unknowable Being, spoken of as the “Abyss.” Forming a connecting chain between Him and the finite creation are the “æons” (or “powers,” “angels,” etc.) proceeding from the highest Being by “emanation.” These “æons,” taken together, form the “pleroma,” or fulness of the Divine (His self-unfoldings). The origin of the world is generally explained by a fall or rupture in the “pleroma,” or the descent of some lower or inferior “æon.” Matter is conceived of as inherently evil—sometimes as independently existing. In all Gnostic systems¹ a distinction is made between the Supreme God and the “Demiurge” or author of this lower world. The latter is regarded as an inferior, limited, imperfect Being, and is identified with the God of the Old Testament and of the Jews. The God of the Gospel revealed by Jesus Christ is thus invariably contrasted with the God of creation and of the Old Testament. This might almost be said to be the hinge on which Gnosticism turns. Jesus Himself is conceived of either as a heavenly “æon” who descends to earth, clothed with the *appearance* of a body

¹ An exception such as that of Bardesenes (Syria) is hardly worth noting.

— a phantasmal body (doketism), or as an earthly Messiah, on whom the heavenly “æon” descends at the Baptism, but leaves Him again at the Crucifixion. **Redemption** is through knowledge, and is possible in the full sense only to the “spiritual” part of mankind (the “Gnostics”). The rest are either “carnal,” wholly incapable of salvation, or belong to an intermediate class (“psychical,” soulish) who have a modified benefit. In practical operation Gnosticism was sometimes ascetic (mortifying the body, forbidding marriage, etc.); sometimes, as an assertion of the superiority of the spirit to the flesh, it passed over into unrestrained licentiousness.

3. The Gnostic Systems.—The beginnings of Gnosticism are already manifest in the New Testament (Colossian heresy; 1 Tim. i., vi., 20, “*gnosis* falsely so called”; Rev. ii., 24; St. John’s epistles). As known in Church history, we may distinguish the early gnostic systems, the semi-developed systems (Ophite, etc.), and finally the developed systems (Basilides, Valentinus, Marcion). At the head of gnostic teachers the Fathers always place **Simon Magus**. Claiming to be “the Power of God which is called Great” (first and chief of the emanations, Acts viii. 10), Simon had associated with him a female companion of low character (Helena), represented as the “power” next in rank to himself, from whom proceeded the makers of the world. The angels detained this “æon” in the lower world, and Simon descended to redeem her. His disciple was **Menander**. A sect of Simonians lingered on till the third century. Among early *Christian Gnostics* a prom-

inent place is given to **Cerinthus**, the contemporary of St. John. It is he of whom the story is told that St. John, seeing him one day in a bath at Ephesus, exclaimed: "Let us fly, lest the bath should fall while Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is in it." He distinguishes between the lower, earthly Christ born of Joseph and Mary, and the higher, heavenly Christ who descended on Jesus at the Baptism, but left Him again before His death.¹ **Carpocrates** is the first of the openly licentious Gnostics. Christ in his system has no essential pre-eminence over others. Hence, in the Carpocratian worship, the image of Christ was placed alongside those of other philosophers (first notice of images). The duty of the Gnostic is to show his contempt for the rulers of the world by unbridled indulgence of the passions. The sect was continued by **Epiphanes** (son of Carpocrates) and **Prodicus**.

The *semi-developed* Gnosis is chiefly represented by the remarkable group of systems known as **Ophite** (from *ophis*, serpent). They derive this name from the honour paid to the "serpent" as the symbol of intelligence. The Creator of this world is an ignorant, imperfect Being (Ialdabaoth = "Son of Chaos"), who thinks Himself the Supreme God. It is therefore a merit when the serpent (Gen. iii.) persuades the first pair into disobedience of Him. The most characteristic of the multitude of sects bearing this name (Naasenes, Peratæ, Sethites, etc.) is the **Cainites**, who reversed all the ordinary standards of moral judgment, choosing as

¹ St. John's epistles may have this system in view.

their heroes the persons whom the Bible condemned (Cain, men of Sodom, Esau, Korah, etc.). The Syrian Gnosis was represented by **Saturninus**, said to be a disciple of Menander, whose system is marked by strong *dualism* and gloomy *asceticism*. He is reputed one of the founders of the *Encratite* heresy (condemning marriage, etc.). To this party Tatian fell away after the death of Justin, holding, it is said, with the other Gnostics, a series of "æons," and a distinction between the Supreme God and the Demiurge.

It is, however, in the *developed* Gnostic systems that we naturally see the movement in its perfection. The first great name here is **Basilides**, of Alexandria (reign of Hadrian, A.D. 117-38), who, with his son **Isidore**, taught a system (*cf.* Hippolytus), afterwards considerably modified in a popular direction. Basilides was a man of powerful speculative intellect. His first principle is a being so abstract that thought cannot give Him a name. The world is continuously evolved from a *pansperma* or "seed of the world," in which all things were originally potentially contained. It is ruled by two great Archons, who yet subserve the designs of the Supreme. There are no "æons," but the highest "light" descends through the successive spheres till it rests on Jesus of Nazareth. The process is complete when the Divine element ("sonship") is all drawn out and restored to God; oblivion then falls on lower intelligences. Many fine sayings are attributed to Basilides, *e.g.*, "I will say anything rather than doubt the goodness of Providence."

Valentinus, likewise an Alexandrian, taught in Rome (reign of Antoninus, A.D. 138-61). His system is as imaginative and poetical as that of Basilides is speculative. It is a sort of poem of the exile of the soul. Sophia, the lowest of the “æons,” burns with desire for the knowledge of the Father, and nearly loses her existence in seeking to obtain it. Harmony is only restored in the Pleroma through the projection of two new “æons” (Christ and the Holy Spirit). The expulsion of the product of this disturbance (Achamoth) leads to a repetition of the tragedy in a lower world; and this, in turn, to the formation of our own world, in which, a third time, the drama of fall and redemption is enacted. The Redeemer here is “Jesus the Saviour”—an “æon” produced by the Pleroma as a thank-offering to the Father for the restoration of their own harmony. He descends on the earthly Jesus, whose own body, however, is wrought of higher substance. The disciples of Valentinus (refuted by Irenæus) are **Ptolemæus, Marcus**, (a charlatan), **Heracleon**, who wrote a commentary on St. John, etc.

Lastly we have the system of **Marcion**, of Pontus (disciple of **Cerdo**), who taught in Rome (c. A.D. 140-55). He was later vigorously refuted by Tertullian. Marcion is properly classed among Gnostics, inasmuch as he makes an absolute distinction between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament, is dualistic, and ascribes to Christ only a seeming body. Otherwise his system is wholly unlike those of other Gnostics. He lays, like St. Paul, the stress, not on

knowledge, but on faith. His system may be described as an overstrained Paulinism. The Pauline contrasts of law and Gospel, sin and Grace, works and faith, are strained till they break asunder, and become irreconcilable antagonisms. The God of the Old Testament (and of creation) is opposed to the God of the New Testament as the "just" God (ignorant, harsh, rigorous) to the "good" God, whose nature is wholly love. Marcion wrote a book on the *Antitheses* between the Old Testament and the New Testament, and drew up also a Canon of Scripture (Marcion's "Canon"), which had but one Gospel, *viz.*, a mutilated Luke, and ten epistles of St. Paul. In practice he was rigorously ascetic. Only water, *e.g.*, was used in the Lord's Supper. Marcion founded a "Church," which endured for some centuries. Of Gnostic literature (apart from apocryphal Gospels, etc.) the only complete work that remains to us is the book *Pistis Sophia* (Ophite or Valentinian Gnosis). Some Ophite MSS. have recently been discovered. For the rest we are dependent on the descriptions and quotations in the Fathers.

4. Montanism.—Montanism is another influence that wrought powerfully in the Church from the middle of the second century. It is best explained as a reaction against the growing rigidity of Church forms, the increasing laxity in Church morals and discipline, and the dying out of the spontaneous element in Church life and worship. It had its origin in Phrygia, the population of which had naturally a strong tendency to excitement and extravagance (hence the name *Kataphrygians*).

The essence of the movement lay in its claim to be a **new prophecy**.¹ Montanus gave himself out as a new organ of the Spirit. The Paraclete promised by the Saviour had come in him. He was the founder of the new age or dispensation of the Spirit. With Montanus were associated two prophetesses—**Prisca**, or **Priscilla**, and **Maximilla**. It is characteristic of the Montanist prophecy that it was delivered in trance or ecstasy. One of the oracles of Montanus says: “Behold, the man is as a lyre, and I (the Spirit) sweep over him like a plectrum. The man sleeps and I wake.” The content of the prophecy did not affect doctrine, but chiefly practice. The tendency of the sect was severely ascetic, and its view of **Church discipline** was of the strictest (no forgiveness of mortal sin, etc.). Like most movements of the kind, it was strongly **millenarian**. The place was even named where the New Jerusalem was to descend—the small village of Pepuza, in Phrygia.

In its later form Montanism aimed more at being a simple movement of reform in the direction of stricter life and discipline. The antagonism between the Montanists and the Church party grew naturally very bitter. The Montanists called themselves “spirituals,” and spoke of the Catholics as “psychicals”; the latter denounced the new prophecy as Satanic delusion. Local synods were held which condemned the movement and excommunicated its adherents. Notwithstanding the opposition of the Church authorities, however, Montan-

¹ The singular resemblance to the modern Irvingism will be noticed throughout.

ism spread, and attracted a good deal of sympathy from earnest minds. In North Africa it must have obtained a strong hold. Tertullian of Carthage was its most distinguished convert (A.D. 202)—indeed, its only great man. When, at a council in Iconium (c. A.D. 233), it was decided not to recognise Montanist baptism, the separation from the Church was complete. By Cyprian's time (A.D. 250) Montanism must have nearly died out in Carthage—at least he never refers to it.

5. Apocryphal Writings.—The second century was marked by the production, chiefly in Ebionitic and Gnostic circles, of a profusion of Apocryphal Gospels, Apocalypses, and similar works ("Acts of Apostles" generally later). Such were the *Gospel of the Hebrews*,¹ the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, the first form of the *Protevangelium of James*, the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Apocalypse*, *preaching*, and *Gospel of Peter*, etc. A fragment of the *Apocalypse of Peter*, which stood in high repute in the early Church, was discovered in 1892. The Gnostics had gospels of their own, *e.g.*, the Cainites had a *Gospel of Jude*. Of the above-named, the *Gospel of the Egyptians* and *Gospel of Thomas* originated and were in wide use in Gnostic circles. A special interest attaches to the *Gospel of Peter*, the use of which was forbidden in church in the end of the second century by Serapion, Bishop of Antioch, on account of its *doketic* character. An important fragment of this gospel was discovered in 1886 (at Akhmin, Upper Egypt). It begins in the middle of the history of the Passion and

¹ See chap. iii.

breaks off in the narrative of the Resurrection. The gospel implies the canonical accounts, but greatly alters and adds to them. It bears out the charge of *doketism*. Jesus when crucified "held His peace as though having no pain." His exclamation on the cross was, "My Power, My Power, Thou hast forsaken Me," etc. The Gnostic trail is apparent.

Points for Inquiry and Study.—Compare the doctrines of the Logos in the Apologists with that of the Nicene Creed. Show that Justin's writings presuppose our Gospels. Study the system of Valentinus as a type of Gnosticism (Pressensé). Illustrate the gravity of the crisis of Gnosticism from the place Gnosticism holds in the works of the early Catholic Fathers. Note the lines of Tertullian's refutation of Marcion. Show the evidence which Gnosticism affords to the growing influence of Christianity (Orr). Cf. Montanism and Irvingism. Contrast the apocryphal and canonical Gospels.

Books.—Lightfoot on "Colossian Heresy" in *Commentary on Colossians*; Mansel's *Gnostic Heresies*; Pressensé's *Early Years*; Orr's *Neglected Factors and Progress of Dogma*; Sanday's *Gospels in Second Century*; Westcott's *Canon*; *Apocryphal Gospels* and additional volume in "Ante-Nicene Library"; Orr's *New Testament Apocryphal Writings* ("Temple Bible" series).

CHAPTER VIII

THE AGE OF THE OLD CATHOLIC FATHERS

(A.D. 180-250)

THE death of Marcus Aurelius proved how superficial was the ethical revival associated with his reign. The accession of his son, Commodus (A.D. 180), reopened the floodgates to the worst evils and vices. The period that followed was one of frequent changes of emperors, of rampant military licence, of much disorder and disorganisation in the state. This was to the advantage of the Christians, in so far as it drew away attention from them, and left the emperors no time to concert measures to their hurt. But it told also to their disadvantage, in placing them more at the mercy of popular tumult and of governors unfavourably disposed. The very calamities of the empire were made a ground of accusation against them. "If the Tiber overflows the walls," says Tertullian, "if the Nile does not irrigate the fields, if the skies are shut, if the earth quakes, if there is a famine or a pestilence, immediately the cry is raised, 'The Christians to the lion'" (*Apol.*, 40). Nevertheless, the Church during this period made unprecedented progress, and, under the guidance of the great anti-Gnostic Fathers (Irenæus, Tertullian, Cle-

ment, Origen, etc.), assumed definitely the character of a Church Catholic and Apostolic.

I. From Commodus to Severus—The Severian Persecution.—During the evil reign of Commodus no systematic attempt was made to molest the Christians. Marcia, the emperor's mistress, was even friendly to the Church, and interested herself on its behalf, *e.g.* in procuring the release of certain confessors from the Sardinian mines. Yet, as illustrating the general insecurity above referred to, Clement, writing shortly after the close of this reign, could say, “Many martyrs are daily burned, crucified or beheaded before our eyes” (*Strom.*, ii. 20). Apollonius, a distinguished senator, suffered in this reign.¹ The murder of Commodus was succeeded by a season of confusion, calamity, and bloodshed. Pertinax was killed after a reign of a few months. Then followed a scene of degradation such as the empire had never yet witnessed. The imperial office was put up to public auction on the ramparts of Rome, and unblushingly sold to the highest bidder. The purchaser, Julianus, did not keep his dearly-bought honours long. The legions rejected him, and out of the anarchy that ensued Septimius Severus, the Pannonian general, emerged as the strongest man.

The eighteen years' reign of this emperor (A.D. 193-211) proved him to be an able and vigorous, if also a stern ruler. He was at first favourably affected to the

¹ His *Acts* have now been recovered. The Scillitan martyrs in North Africa (*cf.* Neander) are now also referred to the reign of Commodus.

Christians; his Syrian wife, Julia Domna, a lady of literary and eclectic disposition, was also friendly. It is not clear what led to his change of policy. He may have been influenced by his growing dislike of illegal associations, or by cases of insubordination like that related by Tertullian (*On the Soldier's Crown*), where a soldier refused to wear the ordinary laurel garland in going up to receive his donative from the emperor. In any case, in A.D. 202, he issued an edict,¹ forbidding under severe penalties conversion to either Judaism or Christianity. Thus was initiated what is reckoned as the fifth persecution, though we have interesting proof from a tract of Tertullian, *To the Martyrs* (before A.D. 202), that even prior to the publication of this edict martyrdom was far from unknown. The severity of this persecution seems to have fallen chiefly on Egypt and North Africa, and some noble martyr incidents are recorded from these regions. A chief seat of the persecution was Alexandria. Leonidas, the father of Origen, was put to death at this time by beheading; Origen himself, then a youth of seventeen, would have perished also had not his mother forcibly prevented him from giving himself up. Another conspicuous instance was that of the maiden Potamiæna, who, with her mother, Marcella, was, after many tortures, burned to death with boiling pitch. Her constancy was the occasion of the conversion of others, among them of Basilides, the officer in charge.

To North Africa—Carthage or Tuburbiuum—belong the famous martyrdoms of Perpetua and her companions,

¹ Or rescript: thus Neumann.

of which an account is preserved written partly by Perpetua herself. Perpetua was a young married lady, of noble rank, recently a mother, who, for her faith, was thrown into a loathsome prison with four companions. One was a slave girl, Felicitas ; the three others were youths—Revocatus, Saturninus, and Secundulus. All were catechumens, and were baptised in prison. Perpetua's father was a pagan, and sought by the most heart-rending entreaties to induce her to recant. She and her companions stood firm, and were condemned to die at an approaching festival. In prison Felicitas was overtaken by the pangs of maternity. When asked how she would bear the keener pain of being torn by the wild beasts, she answered, "It is I who bear my present sufferings, but then there will be One within me to suffer for me, because I too shall suffer for Him." The men were torn to pieces in the amphitheatre by wild beasts ; the women were exposed in a net to be tossed by a cow, and ultimately killed by the swords of the gladiators. The document which tells the pathetic story has in it a tinge of Montanistic enthusiasm, and contains the first traces of prayers for the dead.¹

2. Succeeding Emperors—The Persecution under Maximin.—The persecution went on through the whole reign of Severus ; in the later stages of it some of Origen's disciples suffered. That it continued into the reign of his son, Caracalla (A.D. 211-17), is evident from Tertullian's address *To Scapula*, in which Severus is spoken of as already dead. But that "common enemy

¹ There is a trace as early as Hermas of purgatorial suffering.

of mankind" was too much absorbed in his vices to trouble about the Christians, and persecution gradually stopped. Under the wicked and effeminate Syrian emperor **Elagabalus**, nephew of Severus (A.D. 218-22), the Christians were also allowed peace. Elagabalus had been high-priest of the Sun at Emesa, in Syria, and now imported into Rome the lewdest excesses of the Syrian Sun and Astarte worship. He had a settled design of blending all worships with his own, and, as a step to this, every foreign religion, including Christianity, was tolerated. Other influences may have been at work, for we find Hippolytus addressing a treatise to Julia Aquila, the second wife of the emperor. She may therefore be presumed not to have been unfriendly to Christianity. Elagabalus was cut off before the full effect of his plans could be seen, and the Church for the first time enjoyed a season of real favour and protection under his gentle and virtuous cousin, **Alexander Severus** (A.D. 222-35).

Alexander profitably divided the hours of his day between private devotion, assiduous attention to public business, the cultivation of his mind through literature and philosophy, manly exercises and rational and refined intercourse in the evenings. In religion he was an eclectic. The bust of Christ was placed in his private chapel alongside of those of other persons held in special reverence—Abraham, Orpheus, Apollonius, etc.; and he had inscribed on the walls of his palace and public monuments the maxim, "What ye would not have others do to you, do ye not to them." This

maxim, it is said, he was constantly repeating. Under the reign of such an emperor the position of Christianity was practically that of a *religio licita*. The mother of Alexander, Julia Mammæa, who exercised a considerable influence on the government, was also deeply interested in Christianity, and invited Origen to confer with her at Antioch. A reign like Alexander's, however, was naturally displeasing to the rude military, and an unfortunate Persian war led to his murder, and to the accession of the Thracian savage, **Maximin** (A.D. 235-38). Under this tyrant occurred what is known as the **sixth persecution**.

Maximin seems to have been moved in his rage against the Church chiefly by hatred of his predecessor. His acts were directed at first only against the heads of the Churches. Origen, as a friend of Julia Mammæa, was marked as a victim, and had to flee from Cæsarea. Anti-Christian fury, however, once let loose, did not readily confine itself within limits, and the Church suffered severely in different places, especially in Cappadocia and Pontus, where destructive earthquakes had awakened the passions of the populace. A beautiful work of Origen on *Martyrdom* relates to this persecution.

The times of confusion that followed—the reigns of the two Gordians, of Balbinus and Maximus, of Gordian III. (A.D. 238-44), yield nothing for our purpose. During this period the Christians enjoyed a respite, which was continued and even confirmed by the next emperor, **Philip the Arabian** (A.D. 244-49). Philip was the son of a Bedouin robber-chief—called, therefore, “Philip the

Robber"—but he has the distinction of figuring with some ecclesiastical writers as the first Christian emperor. Both he and his wife Severa had correspondence with Origen. It is certain that he looked with very favourable eyes on Christianity, without, however, showing any trace of its influence in his public conduct. At the great secular games, *e.g.*, in celebration of the completion of the thousandth year of Rome's existence—which was the great feature of his reign—the ceremonies were entirely pagan. Philip was slain in conflict with Decius (A.D. 249).

3. Progress of Christianity in this Period.—The astonishingly rapid spread of Christianity in this age is one of the most remarkable facts about it.¹ The apologetic writers, *e.g.*, Tertullian and Origen, give the strongest expression to their consciousness of coming victory. "Men cry out," says Tertullian, "that the state is besieged; the Christians are in the fields, in the ports, in the islands. They mourn, as for a loss, that every sex, age, condition and even rank is going over to this sect" (*Apol.*, i.). Origen, in the reign of Philip, writes, "Every form of religion will be destroyed except the religion of Christ, which will alone prevail. And indeed it will one day triumph, as its principles take possession of the minds of men more and more every day" (*Against Celsus*, viii. 68). With every allowance for rhetorical exaggeration, it is impossible to doubt that Christianity was taking root throughout the empire with a rapidity and vigour that astonished both

¹ For fuller details, see *Neglected Factors*, etc.

friends and foes. The Church had spread, in greater or less measure, from Britain in the west to the Tigris in the east, from the Rhine in the north to the Libyan desert in the south. It had extended itself in Gaul and Spain and North Africa, in Asia Minor, in Mesopotamia, in Arabia. It had penetrated across the Danube into the tribes of the barbarians. It included not only great numbers of the population, but persons of all ranks in society. There were Christians of high standing in the households of the emperors; the rebukes administered by Tertullian and Clement to the wealthy and luxurious in the Churches prove, what other testimonies bear out, that many in these classes had received the Gospel.

The very suddenness with which the existence of large and influential Churches like those of **Carthage**, **Alexandria** and **Lyons** bursts upon us in this period is evidence of the marvellous energy of propagation Christianity was displaying. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that the writers of the period point exultantly to this astonishing progress and draw from it an argument for the divineness of their faith. The boast of Tertullian in his *Apology* is, it should be remembered, that of a contemporary: "We are but of yesterday, and yet we have filled every place belonging to you—cities, islands, castles, towns, assemblies, your very camps, your tribes, companies, palace, senate, forum; we leave you your temples only. . . . All your ingenious cruelties can accomplish nothing. Our number increases the more you destroy us. The blood of the martyrs is their seed" (37, 50). However rhetorically coloured, there must

have been a strong basis of truth in such representations to procure for them any acceptance.

4. Development of the Idea of the Old Catholic Church.—In its conflicts with Gnosticism and Montanism—especially the former—the Church was meanwhile undergoing an internal development which more than paralleled its marvellous outward extension. In combating Gnosticism the Fathers were not waging war with an ordinary foe. They had, as we have already seen, to deal with a system which spurned the literal acceptance of the Gospel facts, and, under pretence of a higher wisdom, transformed them into a phantasmagoria of its own creation; which attacked the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith—the identity of the God of Creation and the God of Redemption, of the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament, the true humanity of the Redeemer, the reality of sin and atonement, etc. In waging this conflict, moreover, they laboured under the very peculiar difficulty that there was as yet no universally recognised standard of truth to go by—no fixed canon of Scripture, no fixed creed, no fixed court of appeal in matters of faith such as the council afterwards became.

What bulwark was to be reared against this innovating tide of speculation? Dr. Hatch has pointed out that the idea struck out by the Church as giving it firm footing in this sea of controversy was that of the “Apostolic.” That was true which was Apostolic; that was false—at least not authoritative—which could not claim apostolic sanction. This thought was applied by

the Fathers of the age specially in three ways.¹ They applied it (1) to an apostolic collection of Scriptures—the idea of a New Testament Canon. We have seen that the Gospels were already read in Justin's day in the ordinary service of the Church; collections of apostolic letters were also very early formed (2 Pet. iii. 16; cf. free use of epistles in Polycarp, etc.). Such collections, however, grew up naturally, informally, with a view to edification, and not with the idea of forming what we mean by a canon of Scripture for the whole Church. The conflict with Gnosticism gave a new turn to this conception. The first attempt at a formal canon of New Testament Scripture we know of was the mutilated canon of Marcion.² Other Gnostic and Ebionitic sects were flooding the Church with apocryphal writings. Under these circumstances, as well as to find a solid basis from which to repel the assaults of opponents, it was of the first importance for the Church, not only to gather the true Scriptures together, but to lay emphasis on that which gave them their claim to authority. This was their apostolic origin and character, *i.e.*, their origin either directly from apostles or from men immediately belonging to the first apostolic circles, and having apostolic sanction for their work. Thus sprang up in the latter part of the second century the conception of a definite canon³ of New Testament Scripture—of a “New Testament,” as it begins expressly to be called, which takes its place beside the “Old Testament” as of equal

¹ Thus Harnack.

² See above, chap. vii.

³ The term itself is later.

validity and authority with it. Lists are now drawn up of the sacred books, *e.g.*, the **Canon** of Muratori; and the Fathers show the clearest consciousness of dealing with a code of writings of inspired character and authority. Tertullian is the first to use the name "New Testament," though the designation seems implied earlier in certain expressions of Melito of Sardis; Irenæus usually speaks simply of the "Scriptures."

The category of the apostolic was applied (2) to an apostolic "Rule of Faith"—the idea of a traditional creed. It was soon manifest that in controversy with Gnostics the appeal to Scripture was not always so conclusive as it seemed. Even where Scripture was not rejected the Gnostics had their own way of interpreting it. Their use of allegorical methods (to which the Fathers themselves gave too much countenance) enabled them to get from the text as much support for their theories as they pleased. The question was no longer as to the canon of Scripture, but as to the sense to be drawn from Scripture when they had it. It was here that the Fathers stepped back from the written Word to the constant and steadfast tradition of the truth which had been maintained in the Church since apostolic days. From earliest times the Church had employed a simple baptismal confession. This had become enlarged till in the second century it assumed substantially the outline of our present **Apostles' Creed**. A form of this kind was certainly in use in the Church of Rome before the middle of the second century; and the forms in use in other Churches show, with variation and paraphrase,

essential agreement. This form, gradually crystallising into settled shape, was laid hold of by the Church and erected into a "rule of faith," which, standing behind Scripture, could be employed as a check on the wanton licence of Gnostic interpretation. It was not intended to supersede Scripture, but to corroborate it; still it marks the introduction of that principle of "tradition," as regulative of faith, which, at a further remove from the primitive source, became the parent of so many abuses.

Finally, this thought of the apostolic was applied (3) to an apostolic succession of office-bearers in the Church—the idea of a continuous historic episcopate, viewed as depository and guardian of the aforesaid tradition. It was not enough that there should be apostolic tradition; there must be some guarantee for the secure transmission and purity of the tradition. This was presumed to be found in the continuous succession of bishops from the days of the apostles. Lists of the succession of bishops in the greater Churches are carefully given by the Fathers in proof that this transmission of apostolic tradition is a possibility and reality. There is clearly here an unhistorical element; for it has already been shown that bishops, in the sense supposed, do not go back to apostolic days.¹ It is in this form, *i.e.*, as a guarantee for the purity of tradition, that the doctrine of an "Apostolic Succession" of bishops first enters. It has not yet the sacerdotal

¹ Cf. Dr. Gore's admission, above noted, p. 64. The bishops in Ignatius are never represented as successors of the apostles.

associations of the next age. Already, however, there has now distinctly shaped itself, as the result of the above processes, the idea of a Catholic Church, *i.e.*, a Church resting on the *fides catholica et apostolica*, and finding its unity in the episcopate, which is regarded also as the depository and guardian of its sacred tradition. From this time, accordingly, the term "Catholic Church"—already found in Ignatius, but simply in the sense of "universal"—gets into currency (Tertullian, Clement, Muratorian fragment, etc.). It needs only the Cyprianic idea of the priestly character of its clergy to complete it.

Points for Inquiry and Study.—Illustrate the Severian persecution from the writings of Tertullian (*cf.* Neander's *Antignosticus*). Read the full story of Perpetua and her companions. Collect the evidences of the remarkable spread of Christianity in this period. Show the extent of the knowledge of the New Testament implied in the writings of Irenæus, Tertullian, etc. Compare the different early versions of the traditional "Rule of Faith" (Schaff, Zahn). Study the earliest form of the doctrine of "Apostolic Succession" in Irenæus (iii., 2, 3, 4; iv., 26) and Tertullian (*On Prescription*, 32, etc.).

Books.—For history, Gibbon, Milman, Neander's *Antignosticus* (Bohn); Orr's *Neglected Factors and Progress of Dogma*; Zahn's *The Apostles' Creed* (also Schaff, Swete, etc.); Harnack's *Expansion of Christianity*.

CHAPTER IX

THE AGE OF THE OLD CATHOLIC FATHERS— (CONTINUED). (A.D. 180-250)

THE chief interest of the period whose external history and internal development we have sought to describe is connected with the names of its great teachers. These form a galaxy of rare brilliance. The study of their works is at the same time the study of the theology and literature of the age.

I. Irenæus of Gaul.—The personal notices of this great Father are scanty. He was born about A.D. 120, perhaps a little later; was a native of Asia Minor; in early life was a disciple of Polycarp, the disciple of St. John. In an Epistle to his fellow-pupil Florinus, who had lapsed into Gnosticism, he speaks of the vivid recollection he retained of Polycarp's discourses, and how they agreed with what was related in the Scriptures. He was a presbyter in Lyons during the persecution under Marcus Aurelius in A.D. 177.¹ The Montanist controversy was raging, and Irenæus bore an intercessory letter on behalf of the Montanists from the martyrs to Eleutherus, the Bishop of Rome (*Eus.*, v., 4).

After the martyrdom of the aged Pothinus, Irenæus,

¹ See above, p. 72.

as the fittest man, was chosen bishop in his place.¹ The only other occasion on which he comes into view is a few years later (A.D. 190-94) in connection with the action of Victor of Rome in the Quarto-Deciman controversy.² The date of his death is uncertain (A.D. 202-3?). All through Irenæus showed himself a man of peaceful and conciliatory spirit—in marked agreement, Eusebius says, with his name (= peaceful).

His one literary monument (besides fragments) is his great work, in five books, “*Against Heresies*,” directed specially against the Valentinians (A.D. 180-90). It exists only in an early Latin translation; portions of the Greek, however, are preserved by other writers. The author’s **theological opinions** are developed incidentally, but sufficiently to show that Irenæus had a theology of a very definite and organic character. The central thought in his conception of Christianity is the **incarnation**. Creation needs the incarnation for its perfecting. Only through the entrance of the Word (Logos) into humanity could man be led to his destination as a son of God. Irenæus has no dubiety as to the eternal existence of the Word. “The Son has always existed with God, has always revealed the Father, has always revealed the *full* Godhead” (Harnack). Redemption is brought under his favourite idea of a recapitulation of humanity in Christ. Christ is the compendium of the race; sums up the nature, the experiences, the history

¹ Lyons would appear at this time to have been the only bishopric in Gaul.

² See below, p. 123.

of mankind in Himself. His obedience retracts the disobedience of the Fall. As our Head he wins for us a complete victory over Satan. He enters into our lot and doom as sinners, and ransoms us by His death. A trace only is discernible of the theory afterwards developed that Satan through the Fall obtained rights over men which had to be respected. In *eschatology* Irenæus is crudely Chiliastic (Antichrist, the first resurrection, the New Jerusalem, the 1000 years' reign etc.). His *sacramental teaching* conforms to the now well-established Catholic type. The Eucharistic elements, *e.g.*, are "antitypes" of the Lord's body and blood; yet there is a real mystical union of these elements with the body and blood of Christ, so that in receiving them the communicant is nourished by the latter.

2. Tertullian of Carthage.—Tertullian is the first of the great Latin Fathers, and founder of Latin theology. His general place in the history is about twenty years after Irenæus. He follows Irenæus closely in his anti-gnostic polemic and doctrine of the Church. The two men, however, are as different as can well be conceived. The calm, temperate spirit of Irenæus bears no resemblance to the fiery, impetuous nature of the North African Father. No impartial person will doubt his deep or sincere piety; yet the fire within him burned often with a murky flame. Tertullian was born at Carthage probably about A.D. 160. His father is said to have been a proconsular centurion, and he was educated for the law. His life till manhood was spent

in heathenism, but its follies and pleasures left his soul unsatisfied. His conversion to Christianity may have been about A.D. 192. He probably became a presbyter of the Church at Carthage. We know that he was married, and that his wife also was a Christian.

The decisive event in his career was his conversion to Montanism (c. A.D. 202). Thereafter his relations with the Church were embittered, and he withdrew from its communion (*Against Praxeas*, 1). It is doubtful, however, how far this withdrawal went. It is certain that Tertullian always regarded himself as belonging in a true sense to the Catholic Church, and there are evidences that towards the end of his life the asperities softened. His death is placed A.D. 220-40. Whatever his faults of temperament, Tertullian's ability as a Christian advocate is second to none. His literary activity was prodigious. His pages sparkle with brilliant and original thoughts; are, indeed, for vigour, terseness and mastery of literary expression unsurpassed in patristic literature. Cyprian's admiration of him was such that it is said a day never passed without his calling for some of his works, saying, "Give me the master." His writings are usually divided into those written *before* and those written *after* he became a Montanist, though it is doubtful to which class some are to be referred.

To the first period (A.D. 197-202) belong the tract *To the Martyrs* (A.D. 197), the *Apology* (A.D. 198-99), to which two books, *To the Nations*, are related (possibly as an earlier sketch), the beautiful tract *On the Witness*

of the Soul (the germ of which lies in “the soul naturally Christian” of the *Apology*, 17), with a number of short treatises—“Tracts for the Times,” as they have been happily called—dealing with questions arising out of the life of the time, and with practical subjects (e.g., on *The Spectacles*; on *Idolatry*; on *The Attire of Women*; two treatises *To My Wife*, discussing second marriage; on *Penitence, Prayer, Patience*, etc.). These shorter pieces especially exhibit a mixture of argument, wit, sarcasm, raillery, very characteristic of Tertullian. Though not yet a Montanist, his standard of judgment is always severe.

The second period (after A.D. 202) reflects his changed attitude to the Church, and shows Tertullian at his best and his worst. The resources of his rhetoric, his brilliant antitheses, his Christian zeal, his powerful and often convincing reasoning, command admiration; on the other hand, his faults of temper and argument are often glaring. Here, again, we have to distinguish between his shorter occasional pieces called forth by special circumstances (as, e.g., on *The Soldier's Crown*, on *Flight from Persecution*, on *The Veiling of Virgins*, on *Single Marriage*, on *Fasting*, etc.), and his longer controversial works. The principal of these are his great work, in five books, *Against Marcion*, and his treatise *Against Praxeas*¹ (other works, *Against Hermogenes*, *Against the Valentinians*, etc.). Reference should be made also to his forcible tractate, *To Scapula* (the proconsul), in

¹ See below, chap. xi.

which, A.D. 212, he powerfully champions the cause of the whole of the Christians.

Tertullian's abiding services to the Church are those which he rendered as *apologist* and *theologian*. The *apology* of Tertullian is by universal consent regarded as his masterpiece. It is addressed to the emperor, and is a noble piece of pleading. The opening chapters are introductory; they urge that Christianity is hated because it is unknown. The body of the *Apology* is divided into two parts—the *first* refuting the charges against the Christians (first the popular calumnies of killing infants, practising incest in their assemblies, etc., then the capital charges of irreligion and disloyalty to the emperor); the *second* describing in beautiful words the simple, spiritual, and orderly character of the Christian worship, and the real nature of the much maligned love-feast. The closing portion replies to objectors, and reminds of coming judgment. As a *theologian* Tertullian left his deep stamp on after thinking. He practically created the Latin ecclesiastical tongue, and gave to theology many of the terms which have become its permanent possession (*e.g.*, one substance, three persons, satisfaction, merit, New Testament, rule of faith, etc.). On the Trinity he followed the views of the apologists in not attributing to the Son an eternal *personal* existence. The Trinity is an internal Divine "economy" or dispensation, with a view to creation and redemption. He follows Irenæus pretty closely on the doctrines of Man and the Incarnation, Man was made after the image of the future Incarnate

One (*Christi futuri in carne*). The earlier appearances of the Son to the patriarchs are "rehearsals" of the Incarnation. Tertullian has a much deeper view of sin than obtained in the Greek Church; but his ideas of penitential satisfaction obscure grace, and give a gloomy tinge to his theology. The words, "This is My body" in the supper are explained, "This is the *figure* of My body"; but a real presence in the elements is presupposed.

3. The Alexandrian School—**Pantænus and Clement.**

—Alexandria was, next to Athens, the city of the Greek world in which intellectual tendencies of every sort met and commingled. It was to be expected, therefore, that in this busy centre the attempt would early be made to unite Christianity with what was best in the thought and culture of the time. This, accordingly, is what we see taking place in the famous **Catechetical School** at Alexandria. It is characteristic of the Alexandrian School that it takes up a genial attitude to heathen learning and culture; regards Greek philosophy and science as in its way also a providential preparation for the Gospels; seeks to meet an antichristian Gnosis by a better Gnosis, which grows out of faith and love. It is speculative, liberal, idealistic in spirit; in its Scriptural methods allegorical, though not to the subversion of the history, as in the heretical Gnosticism.

Of the founder and first teacher of this school, **Pantænus** (c. A.D. 180), we know very little. He was a Stoic philosopher, well trained in Greek learning, and the first, Origen says, who applied this learning in Christian instruction. His school was designed for

catechumens, *i.e.*, those in training for baptism, but many heathens who desired instruction attended. Either before or after his catechetical labours he travelled widely in the East as an evangelist, penetrating as far as India (Arabia Felix ?), and finding there, it is said, a copy of the Gospel of Matthew (in Hebrew), which had been left by St. Bartholomew.

His most distinguished pupil was **Clement**, who succeeded him as head of the school in A.D. 189. Clement of Alexandria was born, probably at Athens, A.D. 150-60. Brought up in paganism—he speaks even of his initiation into the mysteries—he undertook a series of travels in pursuit of truth, but found no rest till he met with Pantænus. That “Sicilian bee,” he says, “gathering the spoil of the flowers of the prophetic and apostolic meadow,” engendered in his soul a deathless element of knowledge (*Strom.*, i., 2). His own genius gave new lustre to the school, over which he presided for thirteen or fourteen years, till the persecution of Severus (A.D. 202) compelled his withdrawal. From this time Clement is well-nigh lost sight of. He is supposed to have died about A.D. 220. Throughout he may be regarded as contemporary with Tertullian. Clement’s genius is cast in a mould totally different from that of the other Fathers we have named. He was, like Tertullian, a man of amazing learning, but he applied his learning in quite another way. He has none of the austerity of the Carthaginian Father; but was soaring, poetic, idealistic, large and sympathetic in his views of truth. On the other hand, his power of reducing his ideas to

logical order and connection is limited. His thought loves to roam free and unfettered, and his style in writing is exuberant and discursive.

Of the known works of Clement we are fortunate in possessing the three greatest—which, yet, in their connection form one work. They belong to the period of his work in Alexandria, and give a good idea of his instruction. They are entitled respectively *The Address to the Greeks* (aiming at conversion from paganism), *The Pædagogue or Tutor* (a manual of moral discipline, entering into minute details of conduct), and *The Stromata or Miscellanies* (initiating into the higher knowledge). These follow, he tells us, the method of the all-glorious Word, who first addresses, then trains, and finally teaches (*Pæd.*, i. 1). The Word is the “Pædagogue.” The *Stromata*, while dealing largely with the relations of faith and knowledge, do not give much help in apprehending Clement’s theology. Had we possessed his *Outlines* (a lost work) we might have been in better case. The central idea is the Logos (Word) as the enlightening source of all truth in humanity. The Logos is eternal, but the Trinitarian distinctions are so idealistically conceived as almost to lose their personal character. Even the sacraments are apprehended in a highly ideal way. Clement prepares for Origen by teaching a preaching in Hades for those who died without opportunity of repentance here (second probation), as well as for the righteous through the law and philosophy, *i.e.*, just men, both Jews and Gentiles, who died before the Advent.

4. Origen.—Origen was the favourite pupil of Clement, as Clement had been the disciple of Pantænus. We can hardly err in recognising in him the greatest of the teachers of the early Church—one of the greatest minds the Church has seen in any age. Origen was born at Alexandria in A.D. 185. His parents were both Christians. He showed remarkable ability as a boy, committing to memory large portions of Scripture, and often perplexing his father, Leonidas, by the questions he asked. His father reproved him, but in secret thanked God for such a son, and often, while he slept, kissed his breast as a temple of the Holy Ghost. When the persecution broke out (A.D. 202), his father was one of the first victims. Origen laboured to support the family, and managed to collect a small library. His reputation was such that, on the withdrawal of Clement, he was induced, though only a youth of eighteen, to take the oversight of the school and give instruction in it (A.D. 203). The persecution still raged, and many of his early pupils suffered martyrdom. Origen, however, was nothing daunted, and his labours were crowned with remarkable success. To procure subsistence, as he would receive no payment, he sold his valuable collection of classical books. He went further, and taking literally the injunction in Matthew xix. 12, he performed an act of self-mutilation, which he lived bitterly to regret. In order better to qualify himself for his work, he took lessons in philosophy from Ammonius Saccas, the founder of the Neo-Platonic school. He learned Hebrew also to prepare him for his Biblical studies. His course em-

braced arts and letters as well as studies properly theological. These preparatory studies he subsequently handed over to a colleague.

His period of labour in Alexandria lasted for twenty-eight years (A.D. 203-31). It was broken by visits to Palestine, in the *first* of which (A.D. 215-18) he taught in the churches; in the *second* (extended to Achaia), A.D. 228-31, he was ordained **presbyter**.¹ These steps drew down on him the displeasure of the narrow-minded bishop, Demetrius, and compelled his departure from Alexandria. A council convened by the bishop excommunicated and deposed him (A.D. 231). The bishops in Palestine and elsewhere treated this sentence as null. The second period of his work was at Cæsarea, where he opened a school on a still larger scale, and conducted it with even more brilliant success. His labours at Cæsarea, broken only by a brief withdrawal during the persecution of Maximin (A.D. 236), continued for nineteen years (A.D. 231-50). Origen was apprehended, imprisoned and tortured in the persecution of Decius² (A.D. 250). He was released in A.D. 251, but died from the effects of the torture in A.D. 253 (? 254), at the age of sixty-nine.

It is impossible to give more than an indication of this Father's extraordinary literary labours. During his later residence at Alexandria he wrote many of his *Commentaries*, and also his book on "First Principles"—our first work on systematic theology. A wealthy

¹ Shorter visits were paid in this and the subsequent period to Rome, Arabia, etc.

² See chap. x.

layman, Ambrose, provided him with the means of carrying on his labours on the most extended scale, gave him shorthand writers, etc. A colossal work, which occupied him for twenty-eight years, was his "Hexapla," a collation of the LXX with the Hebrew text, and three other Greek versions (the Hebrew being printed also in Greek letters as a sixth column). The work, except the LXX part, has perished. To Cæsarea belong *Homilies*, treatises on *Prayer*, *Martyrdom*, etc. In A.D. 249, in the reign of Philip, he wrote his great work in eight books, "Against Celsus"¹—the noblest apology of the early Church. It has already been hinted that his expositions of Scripture give large scope to the allegorical method.

As a theologian Origen shows a speculative genius hardly equalled. He distinguishes between what belongs to the rule of faith (to which he adheres) and points which the doctrine of the Church leaves undetermined; and claims for his speculations on these points only tentative and provisional value. He emphasises in the Trinity the "eternal generation" of the Son; on the other hand, lays such stress on the hypostatic distinction, and subordination of Son and Spirit to the Father, as almost to dissolve the Divine unity. He speaks even of the Son in relation to the Father (absolute deity) as "a second God." As God, he thinks, must eternally have worlds on which to display His omnipotence, he teaches eternal creation. There is a pre-existence of souls, and sin is explained by a fall of souls in this pre-existent

¹ See above, chap. vi.

state. There was one pure soul that did not fall, but clave in love to the Logos. This is the soul of Jesus. Thus Origen explains the sinlessness of Christ. Redemption he regards under many points of view—among them that of a deception of Satan, who cannot retain the soul of Jesus, given him as ransom price for men. Origen is the first pronounced restitutionist in the Church. All souls and worlds, he thinks, will yet be brought back to God. The daringness of some of these speculations involved the Church in much after trouble (Origenistic controversies). Apart from his theological views, Origen is a valuable witness to Christian facts. He bears witness, *e.g.*, to the usage of the Church in infant baptism, and traces the custom back to the apostles. Tertullian, on the other hand, advised delay.

5. The Church of Rome in this Period—Hippolytus and Callistus.—Many circumstances combined to exalt the Church of Rome in the second century to a position of exceptional pre-eminence (the political capital, antiquity and apostolic character of Church, wealth and liberality of members, etc.). This pre-eminence was, however, solely one of respect and honour. It did not mean that the Church of Rome was as yet allowed any real authority or jurisdiction over other Churches. The aim of the bishops of Rome, on the other hand, was to change this position of honour into one of actual authority. Every claim of this kind was, by other bishops, strenuously resisted.

A case which makes this clear, and at the same time marks a stage in the claims of the Roman bishop, is that

known as the Quarto-Deciman controversy or dispute about the time of keeping Easter. In Asia Minor the Churches began and finished their celebration on one day—the fourteenth day of Nisan, or day of the Jewish Passover, on whatever day of the week it might fall. They held that this was the custom handed down to them from the apostle John. Rome and the Churches of the West, on the other hand, followed not the day of the month but the day of the week. They began on Friday of the Passover-week (Good Friday) and ended on the Easter Sunday morning. The matter was discussed in a friendly spirit between Polycarp, of Smyrna, and Anicetus, Bishop of Rome (c. A.D. 155), without, however, a settlement being arrived at. It was the occasion of a sharp controversy in Asia Minor itself between Melito of Sardis and Apollinaris¹ of Hierapolis (c. A.D. 170). Melito defended the Asiatic practice. But the most important stage in the controversy was in A.D. 190-94, when Victor, a haughty and imperious man, was Bishop of Rome. Victor issued a mandate requiring conformity to the Roman practice; then, when protest was made, threatened the excommunication of the Asiatics. This assumption of authority was too much even for many who agreed with Victor in principle, and immediate remonstrances were made. The chief of these was from Irenæus, who, in a letter to Victor, earnestly reproves him for his arrogance. Irenæus was successful in his protest, and the excommunication was not carried out. The Roman custom was ultimately

¹ In Eusebius, "Apolinarius."

affirmed at the Council of Nicæa (A.D. 325), though not till it had become generally accepted throughout the Churches.

The bishops next in succession to Victor were Zephyrinus (A.D. 200-18) and Callistus (A.D. 218-23), regarding whom (especially the latter) there is a curious story to tell which is best connected with the account of another great Church Father—Hippolytus. Hippolytus has had a most singular fate. A voluminous and learned writer, and one of the most conspicuous figures in the Roman Church of his day, he seems afterwards to have dropped almost entirely out of view. Two interesting discoveries in modern times have restored him to our knowledge. First, his statue was dug up in Rome in 1551 (on the back of the chair his Easter cycle and list of his writings); and second, in 1842, his long-lost work, in ten books, *A Refutation of all Heresies*, was recovered (published in 1851). The first book had long been attributed to Origen, under the name *Philosophoumena*; the second and third books are wanting in the MSS., but the rest of the work is nearly entire. A valuable feature in the book is the original light it throws on the system of Basilides. But by far its most interesting service is its account of the state of the Roman Church under the two bishops above-named, and of Hippolytus's own relation to them.

Hippolytus in early life was a hearer of Irenæus in Gaul or Rome. Later he headed a party of opposition in Rome to the bishops Zephyrinus and Callistus, whom he accuses at once of doctrinal heresy and of scandalous

laxity in discipline (Bk. ix.). Zephyrinus he describes as a weak and illiterate man, covetous and accessible to bribes, and in the latter part of his life completely under the influence of Callistus. The latter used him for his own purposes, and among other things inclined him to the adoption of the Patripassian heresy,¹ then being actively disseminated in Rome. The account of Callistus is in the highest degree unfavourable. Originally the slave of a Christian master, he embezzled the funds of a banking business ; fled, and, when about to be captured, tried to commit suicide ; was sent to the house of correction ; later, for a disturbance in the Jewish synagogue, was banished to the Sardinian mines, etc. We next find him in the confidence of Zephyrinus, who set him over the cemetery ever since called by his name. On the death of Zephyrinus, he had influence enough to get himself appointed as bishop in his place. His scandalous administration is pictured in the darkest colours by Hippolytus.

The difficulty is to know what position precisely Hippolytus himself occupied. He assumes the office of bishop and withholds that designation from Callistus ; speaks of Callistus only as head of a school. A late and worthless tradition makes him Bishop of Portus—the seaport of Rome. He was more probably really a rival bishop to Callistus, set up by his own party — the first of the long line of anti-popes. Yet, all unwitting of his real history, the Church later canonised him as a saint ! The remaining fact of his life of which we can

¹ See below, chap. xi.

speak with certainty is that he and the bishop Pontianus were transported to Sardinia in the persecution of Maximin (A.D. 235). Some kind of reconciliation must have taken place, for the bodies of both were brought back to Rome about A.D. 236-37, and deposited in their respective sepulchres on the same day (13th August). Besides the work on heresies, we have from Hippolytus a treatise *Against Noetus*, and minor works and fragments.

6. Cyprian of Carthage—Completion of Idea of Old Catholic Church.—Cyprian is the last of the old Catholic Fathers, and he marks the transition to the next period. Cyprian is not great as a theologian, but he is a great churchman. To him belongs the distinction of having placed the copestone on the edifice of the old Catholic Church which we have seen being built up by many hands from the days of Ignatius. His personal history presents us with a career of splendid self-sacrifice.

Cyprian was born at Carthage, about A.D. 200, of noble and wealthy parents. Previous to his conversion he was distinguished as a teacher of rhetoric. He was won to Christ about A.D. 245 through the instrumentality of an aged presbyter, Cæcilius, who directed him to the study of the Bible. Cyprian gave proof at once of the thoroughness and decision of his profession by taking Christ's command literally, and voluntarily selling his fine estate for the benefit of the poor. Baptism followed rapidly on conversion, and was signalised by his adoption of the name of his spiritual father, Cæcilius. In a writing of this period, *To Donatus*, Cyprian gives a beautiful

description of the effects of his conversion, and of the contrast between Christianity and heathenism in a moral respect. He was shortly after ordained a presbyter, and a little later—only two years after his baptism—was compulsorily raised by popular acclamation to the dignity of bishop. His elevation gave deep offence to the presbyters who had been passed over. Five presbyters objected to his ordination, and to the jealousy thus created is to be traced most of his after troubles. Thus at the very beginning of his Christian course Cyprian found himself at the head of the clergy of North Africa.

In A.D. 250 the storm of the Decian persecution broke on the Church, and Cyprian thought it prudent to withdraw for a time that he might better direct the affairs of the Church, and prevent it from being deprived of its head. Of the troubles which arose out of this persecution and the difficulties in which they involved Cyprian, we shall speak in the next chapter. He returned to Carthage in A.D. 251, when the persecution had ended through the death of the emperor. In A.D. 252 came the great pestilence, which afforded opportunity for a display of Christian devotion and charity such as paganism was incapable of. A scheme was drawn up for the systematic visitation of the city; a ministry of help was organised; some undertook the work of nursing and burial; and through their unremitting efforts a general pestilence was averted. Under the Valerian persecution, A.D. 257, Cyprian was banished to a city some forty miles distant. A year later (A.D. 258) a more severe edict was issued, and he was sentenced to

death by beheading. The martyrdom took place on a level plain near the city in presence of a vast concourse of spectators, all of whom, even the pagans, did him reverence.

Cyprian, as said above, was less a theologian than a great Church leader. The trying circumstance in which he was placed, and the oppositions he had to encounter, forced on him the task of strengthening to the utmost the bonds of Church unity, and of seeking, in argument with his opponents, a dogmatic basis for that unity. The chief works in which this basis is set forth are his *eighty-one Epistles* (a few not his), and, above all, his treatise on *The Unity of the Church*—the *Magna Charta*, as it has been called, of the old Catholic and High Church conception.

Cyprian's doctrine of the Church may be summed up in three points. (1) *The unity of the Church as represented by the episcopate.* Cyprian gives this a new grounding in basing it on the promise of Christ to St. Peter (Matt. xvi. 18, 19). Peter, however, only represents the unity of the Church in a symbolical way. It is not the Bishop of Rome only, but the whole body of the episcopate, which inherits Peter's prerogatives. (2) *The priesthood of the clergy.* Cyprian is the first to give this conception fixed and definite shape. The way had long been preparing in the development of the idea of sacramental grace, and especially of the eucharist as a sacrifice. The sacrifice in the eucharist was originally the spiritual sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving, or the offering up of the worshipper himself. The idea was

extended to the gifts from which the elements of the Supper were taken ; then to the elements. Now that the idea was established of a real mystical presence of the Lord's body and blood in the elements, it was natural that the conception of the sacrifice should change. The Sacrament becomes a real offering up of the body and blood of the Lord—a renewal of the sacrifice on the Cross. Thus the idea of the sacrifice as a sin-offering, and of the priest as an offerer at the altar (in the Jewish and pagan sense), becomes established in the Church. The clergy are a priestly class, mediating between the people and God, and conveying grace to the people from God. The distinction of clergy and laity becomes absolute. (3) With all this Cyprian held firmly *the autonomy of each bishop in his own Church*. He resisted all arrogant pretensions on the part of the Bishop of Rome. On the question of the re-baptism of heretics, *e.g.*, he came into violent collision with Stephen of Rome (A.D. 255-56), who wished to impose his own views on the Churches of North Africa. The Pope's unqualified primacy gets little help from the Fathers of this age. From the above positions follows logically the conclusion which Cyprian now boldly draws, that out of this visible, episcopally-organised Church there can be no salvation. *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. Hence schism is the worst of sins ; excommunication dooms the soul to perdition.

Points for Inquiry and Study.—Study more fully the lives of the Fathers. Contrast the idea of the bishop in Irenæus and Cyprian. Show more fully the degree of honour allowed to the bishops of Rome in the second and third centuries, and contrast

with modern claims. Trace the development of the eucharist as a sacrifice.

Books.—Lightfoot's "Churches of Gaul" in *Essays*; Brown's *Apostolical Succession*: Farrar's *Lives of Fathers* (also Pressensé, etc.); Barrow's *Supremacy of Pope*; *North African Church* in "Home Library."

CHAPTER X

THE AGE OF THE GREAT PERSECUTIONS: VICTORY OF CHRISTIANITY (A.D. 250-324)

IT is a curious coincidence that the completion of Rome's millennium should also mark the beginning of its downfall. The Gothic invasions had commenced even in the reign of Philip; in that of Decius (A.D. 250-51) they spread frightful desolation through Rome's fairest provinces. The turning-point in the history of the Church is not less marked. Everything seemed going prosperously. It appeared as if an easy and peaceful victory were about to be achieved. But observant eyes, like Origen's, saw that this season of respite was only the calm before the storm of a great final struggle. The breaking of that storm was not long deferred. Hitherto there had been severe and distressing persecutions, but they had been more or less local and limited in range. Now the empire woke up to see that the very existence of paganism was at stake, and for the first time we have systematically planned and strictly universal persecutions.

1. The Decian and Valerian Persecutions.—The Emperor Decius was a Roman of the old school. His two years' reign ended in a defeat by the Goths, in

which he and his army perished miserably in a morass ; but they were years fraught with important consequences for the Christians. Decius was a persecutor, not from impulse but from settled policy. He honestly believed that the salvation of Rome lay in its old institutions, and that Christianity, as a rival power, could not be too speedily or effectually crushed. He is credited with the saying that he would rather have a second emperor at his side than the Bishop of Rome. He was therefore scarcely established in the empire when he launched the edict which inaugurated what is deemed the **seventh persecution** (A.D. 250). He does not seem at first to have desired the death of the Christians. His policy was to terrify them by citing them before the tribunals and requiring them to recant ; then, if they proved obstinate, to coerce them by imprisonments, confiscation, tortures, exile. It was only when these measures failed that the extremest tortures and death were inflicted on confessors, and specially on the bishops.

The persecuting edict was sent throughout the empire and rigorously enforced. Christians who did not appear before the tribunals on an appointed day were to be sought after, and brought before a commission composed of the magistrate and five of the principal citizens. The edict fell like a thunderbolt on the Church. The *Epistles* of Cyprian, his *Treatise on the Lapsed*, and a letter of Dionysius of Alexandria¹ give us vivid pictures of the persecution, but show also how ill-prepared the Church was to meet it. Multitudes in time of peace had joined

¹ *Eus.*, vi. 41.

the Church who had no deep-rooted piety ; and these, especially the wealthier classes, now fell away in large numbers. Dionysius pictures them approaching the altar, pale and trembling, as if they were going to be sacrificed instead of to sacrifice, while the populace who thronged around jeered them. Special names had to be invented to designate the classes of the lapsed (*sacrificati*, those who had sacrificed ; *thurificati*, those who offered incense ; *libellatici*, those who for payment obtained a certificate that they had sacrificed though they had not done so ;¹ and *acta facientes*, those who without certificates pretended they had sacrificed). Many, however, did not apostatise, but submitted to be tormented with heat, hunger, and thirst in their prisons, stretched on the rack, torn with hooks, burnt with fire, and finally put to death. One of the first victims of the persecution was the aged **Fabian**, Bishop of Rome. For more than a year after this no Bishop of Rome could be elected. Other distinguished sufferers were **Babylus** of Antioch and **Alexander** of Jerusalem, Origen's friend. Origen himself, it will be remembered, was imprisoned and tortured. The death of the emperor set him free. The persecution broke out again under his successor, **Gallus** (A.D. 251-54).

It is, however, under the more important reign of the next emperor, **Valerian** (A.D. 254-60), that we come to what is usually numbered as the eighth persecution. Valerian was a man of unblemished virtue, and for the first four years of his reign was not unfavourably disposed towards the Christians. His house is described

¹ Specimens of these *libelli* have been recovered.

by Dionysius as "filled with pious persons, and a Church of God" (*Eus.*, vi. 36). The change seems to have been brought about by a dark-minded man, **Macrianus**, who had acquired great influence over him. The reign of Valerian was the most calamitous the empire had yet experienced ; this also had doubtless its effect. The persecution that ensued exceeded even that of Decius in severity. Its first stage was in A.D. 257, and went no farther than to remove bishops from their churches, and forbid Christian assemblies on pain of death ; the second stage (A.D. 258) was far more drastic, decreeing that office-bearers of churches should immediately be put to death, persons of rank should be degraded, and, if they persevered, should be put to death, noble women and persons of lesser rank should suffer confiscation and banishment.

One of the first to suffer was again the Bishop of Rome, **Sixtus**, who was beheaded in his episcopal chair. We saw that **Cyprian** suffered in this persecution. In Spain we read of a bishop and two deacons being burned alive in the amphitheatre. The persecution came to an end with the captivity of Valerian in Persia (A.D. 260). How little all these persecuting edicts had done to destroy Christianity is shown by the fact that the first step of his frivolous son and colleague, **Gallienus** (A.D. 254-68), was to restore to congregations their right to worship, and give bishops permission to return to their charges. Christianity thus became once more practically a *religio licita*.

2. Effects of the Persecutions—Schisms of Felicis-

simus and Novatian.—A delicate and difficult question for the Church, as soon as the severity of the persecutions had abated, was the restoration of the lapsed. These formed a wide class, and among them were included many shades and degrees of guilt. Multitudes had little real sense of their sin in apostasy, and were indisposed to brook delay in restoration. The evil was aggravated by faction, and by a practice which had grown up of allowing confessors a right of intercession for the fallen, and even of granting certificates of peace with the Church. In Carthage especially this privilege was abused beyond all bounds. The result was two schisms—one at Carthage, the other at Rome, the latter of which, at least, had important historical consequences.

Cyprian's views on the restoration of the lapsed tended to strictness ; he was at any rate opposed to action till a council could be called to settle deliberately terms of re-admission. It will be remembered that a party of opposition to Cyprian existed in Carthage—the result of jealousy at his ordination. The head of this party was a presbyter, Novatus, who had already shown his disregard for Cyprian by ordaining one Felicissimus as his deacon. These threw in their influence with the advocates of lenity, and received back all and sundry to Church fellowship. Novatus shortly after went to Rome, where we find him assuming the opposite *rôle* of a leader of the *strict* party. Cyprian gradually softened in his views, but without effect on the opposition. Felicissimus openly revolted against his authority, and refused to receive a delegation which Cyprian had sent to

inquire into the necessities of sufferers by the persecution. At a council held A.D. 251 Felicissimus was condemned, and at a second council (A.D. 252) milder rules were adopted. The party of Felicissimus now set up a bishop of their own, named **Fortunatus**, and the schism was complete. It seems to have had no permanent success.¹

At Rome a much graver contest was being waged. **Cornelius**, the bishop-elect, was opposed by **Novatian**, a man of sombre temper and rigorous principles, who resisted *all* re-admission of the lapsed to Church communion. He did not deny that the penitent might receive mercy from God, but held that the Church had no power to grant it. Novatus, from Carthage, threw himself into this new strife, and, on the rejection of Novatian, persuaded his party not to accept Cornelius as their bishop, but to elect a bishop for themselves. Novatian was chosen opposition bishop, and a rival Church was formed which developed into a great organisation, spread into many countries (Gaul, Africa, Asia Minor, etc.), and continued for centuries, with a great reputation for piety. Epiphanius, *e.g.*, mentions that in Thyatira there were no Catholics for a hundred and twelve years. Novatian was a genuinely able and learned man, as his work on *The Trinity* shows.

Following on the schisms, embittered disputes arose on the re-baptism of heretics. These, as formerly mentioned, brought Cyprian into collision with **Stephen**, Bishop of Rome (A.D. 255-56). Cyprian, with the North

¹ A third (Novatian) bishop was afterwards set up.

African Church, took the stricter view (insisting on re-baptism); Stephen took the milder. The more charitable view ultimately prevailed.

3. Empire and Church till Diocletian—Neo-Platonism.

—The death of Gallienus in A.D. 268 left the empire in a state bordering on ruin. From this period a rapid succession of emperors held sway whose main task it was to clear the provinces from the barbarians that infested them. They were mostly men of obscure rank, of Illyrian extraction (hence known as the Illyrian Emperors), and of great bravery and skill. The only one that need be mentioned here was Aurelian (A.D. 270-75), who achieved a series of brilliant triumphs in east and west, but made himself odious by his pride and severity. He was zealous for the maintenance of pagan rites (was himself a devoted worshipper of the sun), and was on the point of subscribing an edict for the persecution of the Christians when he was cut off by conspirators. Some allege that the edict was actually issued. It is this, nevertheless, which is reckoned as the ninth persecution —a persecution, it will be seen, only on paper. The murder of the Emperor Numerian in A.D. 284 opened the way for Diocletian, with whom a new era in the empire begins.

During all this period (apart from the danger under Aurelian), as well as during the first nineteen years of the reign of Diocletian (till A.D. 303), the Church enjoyed peace. This is known as the forty years' peace, and while it lasted, the Church continued to grow in numbers, wealth and influence, but also in worldliness and

corruption. Large and magnificent churches began to be erected, greater splendour was introduced into the services, church offices were multiplied, etc.¹ Christians were found in the highest positions in the palace. In the same proportion Church discipline was relaxed, and the old evils from which the Decian persecution had done much to purify the Church returned in full tide.

Reference may be made here to a new form of opposition which had sprung up on the philosophical and literary side, *viz.*, Neo-Platonism. This philosophical form of faith, while bitterly hostile to Christianity, is the strongest testimony to its influence. It no longer poured unqualified ridicule on Christianity, as Celsus had done, but dealt with it in an eclectic spirit, condemning only its exclusive claims. "We must not," said Porphyry, "calumniate Christ, but only pity those who worship Him as God." The founder of this school, Ammonius Saccas of Alexandria (died A.D. 243), was born of Christian parents, and, indeed, for a time himself professed Christianity. A trace of Christian influence may be seen in the Neo-Platonic doctrine of the Trinity, which, however, has little in common with the Christian, but is wrought up from Platonic elements. The problem which Neo-Platonism set itself to solve was the union of the finite and infinite; and its means of bridging the opposition of the two was "ecstasy."

The most illustrious teachers of the school after Ammonius were Plotinus (died c. A.D. 270) and Porphyry (died A.D. 304). Porphyry wrote a book entitled *Dis-*

¹ See chap. xi.

courses against the Christians, of which fragments are preserved in the Fathers who replied to it. Some of his objections to the books of Scripture (*e.g.*, to the book of Daniel) anticipate modern critical attacks. A literary opponent of a coarser stamp, generally reckoned to this school, was **Hierocles**, prefect of Bithynia (afterwards of Alexandria), a cruel persecutor of the Christians. His book, *Truth-loving Words to the Christians* (!), attempts to disparage the character and miracles of Jesus by comparison with those of Aristæus, Pythagoras, and the pagan miracle-worker, Apollonius of Tyana. Eusebius wrote a reply to it. The school afterwards degenerated into theurgy and magic (*e.g.*, **Jamblichus** of Chalcis, who died *c. A.D. 330*). Its last famous teacher was Proclus of Constantinople, the commentator on Plato (died A.D. 485).

4. The Diocletian Persecution.—The last and most violent of all the persecutions that overtook the Christians (the tenth persecution) was that in the reign of Diocletian (A.D. 303-13). **Diocletian**, the son of a slave, introduced changes into the organisation of the empire of far-reaching importance. He assumed personally the style of an Oriental despot; divided the empire into two parts (West and East), with an “Augustus” for each; changed the seat of empire from Rome to the new capitals, Milan (W.) and Nicomedia (E.); further, subdivided the empire by associating with each “Augustus” a “Cæsar,” who was in due course to succeed to the higher dignity. In pursuance of these arrangements, Diocletian (E.) associated with himself, in A.D. 286,

Maximian, a rude but able soldier (W.), and in A.D. 292 added, as the two "Cæsars," **Galerius**, originally a herdsman, and **Constantius Chlorus**, father of Constantine the Great. To consolidate the relations Constantius was required to put away his wife Helena (mother of Constantine) and become son-in-law of Maximian, while Galerius became the son-in-law of Diocletian. Constantius received the rule of Gaul and Britain, and Galerius had Illyria.

If Diocletian did not molest the Christians during the first nineteen years of his reign (his own wife, Prisca, and daughter, Valeria, were reputed Christians) it was not from any love of their religion. But Diocletian was a wary, politic man, and knew better than most what a conflict with Christianity which was to end in its suppression would mean. The real instigator of the persecution was the low-bred, ferocious Galerius. Diocletian long held back, but, plied with arguments by Galerius and the pagan nobles, he at length gave way, and a persecution was agreed on, to take effect on 23rd February, A.D. 303. There was to be no halting or turning back, but measures were to be taken for the entire suppression of Christianity. Proceedings began at daybreak on the day named by the demolition of the magnificent church at Nicomedia (one of the architectural ornaments of the city), and the burning of all copies of the Scriptures found in it. Next day an edict was issued giving the signal for a general persecution. All churches were to be demolished; all copies of the Scriptures were to be burned; Christians holding official po-

sitions were to be degraded and deprived of civil rights ; others were to be reduced to the condition of slaves ; slaves were made incapable of receiving their freedom.

This first edict (A.D. 303) was aimed, it will be observed, rather at the Churches and the Scriptures (a new policy) than the persons of the Christians ; disobedience was punished by degradation, not by death. A second edict (A.D. 303) ordered all clergy, without option of sacrifice, to be thrown into prison. Some time after a third edict was issued, yet more severe. The clergy in prison were required to sacrifice ; if they did not, they were to be compelled by every means of torture. Finally, in A.D. 304, a fourth edict extended this law to the whole body of the Christians. The most fearful tortures were inflicted on the Christians to compel them to submit, and though death was not mentioned in the edict, it was, as we see from Eusebius, freely inflicted. The sweeping severity of this persecution is apparent from the rehearsal of these edicts alone. Their publication, as in the Decian persecution, caused indescribable consternation. Immediately on the publication of the first a soldier rashly tore it down with opprobrious words ; for this act he was roasted over a slow fire. Fires that broke out in the palace were blamed on the Christians, and led to many being burned, beheaded and drowned. Formerly trusted chamberlains of the palace were put to death. Diocletian's own wife and daughters had to clear themselves by sacrifice.

Special panic was created by the order for the surrender and destruction of the Sacred Scriptures. The scenes of

the Decian persecution were repeated in new forms. Multitudes hastened at once to give up their copies of the Scriptures ; some palmed off on the officers worthless and heretical writings ; others, more enthusiastic, not only retained their Scriptures, but boasted of their possession, and challenged the magistrates to do their worst. Those who for any reason gave up their Scriptures were branded with the name *traditors*, and the antagonism to these afterwards gave rise to a new schism—that of the **Donatists** (see below). The later edicts still further tried the faith and patience of the Christians. In Gaul and Britain, first under Constantius, then under Constantine, the Christians enjoyed comparative peace. But throughout the rest of the empire the persecution raged with dreadful cruelty. Egypt and Palestine were specially afflicted.¹

In A.D. 305 Diocletian abdicated, but this rather made matters worse for the Christians. Galerius, the chief promoter of the persecution, was now emperor, and his creatures, **Severus** and **Maximin**, in West and East respectively, were entirely devoted to his interests. The revolt of **Maxentius** in Italy (A.D. 306)² was favourable to the Christians in so far as it was his interest to attach them to his side; and with the defeat of Maxentius by Constantine at the Milvian Bridge, A.D. 312 (see below), persecution in the West may be said to have ended. In the East, under the savage Maximin, it went on with intensified severity till A.D. 311, when a welcome relief came. In that year the arch-persecutor,

¹ See Eus., *Hist.*, viii.

² See below, p. 144.

Galerius, smitten with a dreadful internal disease, was moved to make peace with the Christians, and issued an edict of toleration, granting full liberty of opinion and worship. This was followed in A.D. 313 (after a provisional edict in A.D. 312) by the famous Edict of Milan of Constantine and Licinius (see below). Maximin himself, defeated by Licinius, likewise issued an epistle in which he granted full liberty of worship. One reason he gives for the persecution is that the emperors "had seen that *almost all men* were abandoning the worship of the gods, and attaching themselves to the party of the Christians" (*Eus.*, ix. 9). Thus on every hand the persecution was admitted to have failed, and Christianity emerged triumphant.

5. Career and Character of Constantine—Victory of Christianity.—To judge fairly of Constantine, distinction should be made between the period before he arrived at supreme power and the period that succeeded. In the early period his character and conduct stand before us in a most favourable light. The son of Constantius Chlorus and Helena (said to be the daughter of an inn-keeper), he was born at Naissus, in Dacia, probably in A.D. 274. After his mother's divorce he continued to reside at Nicomedia as a hostage for his father's loyalty. He joined his father in Gaul in A.D. 305, and was proclaimed emperor by the troops in Britain on the death of Constantius in A.D. 306. Galerius, however, only granted him the rank of "Cæsar." At the courts of Diocletian and Galerius he seems to have been a general favourite. His high reputation was maintained in

Britain and in Gaul. He was tall and commanding in appearance, affable in manners, just and tolerant in his rule, pure in his personal morals. He was a man undoubtedly of large ambitions, but these rested on a conscious ability to rule.

From the first he was a protector of the Christians, and, as he sped on from victory to victory in their interests, it is perhaps not wonderful that in their eyes, and in his own, he should come to be regarded as a sort of second Cyrus—a special instrument raised up by God for the deliverance of his Church. In A.D. 306 Maxentius, the son of Maximian, had (with his father) usurped the supreme power in Italy. His reign was one of intolerable oppression. A historical battle was fought between Constantine and Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge, about nine miles from Rome, A.D. 312, which issued in the defeat and drowning of the latter.

It was on the march to this battle that Constantine had his famous **Vision of the Cross**, which some speak of as his “Conversion.” He saw, or believed he saw, a cross in the sky, above the brightness of the sun, bearing on it the words “By this Conquer.” The same night Christ appeared to him in sleep, and directed him to make a standard of like pattern, which should be to him a token of victory.¹ There is nothing improbable in the supposition that the emperor may have seen an appearance in the heavens which his excited imagination construed into a cross; or that in the agitation of his mind, on the eve of so critical a contest, he may have

¹ The incident was narrated on oath by Constantine to Eusebius.

had such a dream as he describes. If his mind was already pondering the question of the acceptance of Christianity, this becomes the more probable. The sacred standard—the **Labarum**—was at least made, and the monogram of Christ was displayed on shields and helmets of soldiers, and on gems and coins. Even yet, however, Constantine was very dimly instructed in the real nature of Christianity. Christianity, indeed, was never much more to him than a system of Monotheism and providence.

The Roman world was now divided between **Constantine** and **Licinius** (an “**Augustus**” of Galerius), and the final struggle could not be long delayed. In A.D. 313 the two emperors issued jointly the **Edict of Milan**, already mentioned. In A.D. 314 two battles were fought, in which Licinius was worsted. A truce of eight years followed. In this interval the mind of Constantine was clearing, and not a few of his laws show a Christian impress. Licinius, on the other hand, took the side of paganism, and the last war, in A.D. 323, was avowedly waged in the interests of the old religion and the old gods. “The issue of this war,” said Licinius, “must settle the question between his god and our gods.” The decisive victory at **Hadrianople** (A.D. 323), therefore, was well understood to be a victory for Christianity. In the following year (A.D. 324) the Christian religion was established. The nature of this settlement, and some of the later events of Constantine’s reign, on which dark shadows rest, are touched on in the next chapter.

6. The **Donatist Schism**.—Even before arriving at full

power Constantine had been asked to adjudicate in an ecclesiastical dispute arising out of the persecution in Carthage. **Mensurius**, Bishop of Carthage, had given offence to the stricter party by evasive conduct when called on to surrender his Scriptures and in other ways. They could accomplish nothing in his lifetime, but when his successor, **Cæcilian**, was elected, in A.D. 311, they broke out in revolt under the leadership of one **Donatus**, accused Cæcilian, of having been ordained by a *traditor* **Felix**, and, at a synod attended by seventy bishops, set up a rival bishop in the person of **Majorinus**. Appeal was made (by the Donatists) to Constantine to have the question determined whether Felix was really a *traditor*; and a series of investigations were held (A.D. 313-16), including one by the **Council of Arles** (A.D. 314), and a final inquiry by the emperor himself (A.D. 316)—all with the same result of clearing Felix and upholding Cæcilian. Majorinus died in A.D. 315, and was succeeded as bishop by a second and greater **Donatus**, from whom the sect specially takes its name. Donatus proved utterly irreconcilable, and Constantine was provoked to order the party into banishment. This edict he recalled next year (A.D. 317). Donatism continued to spread, and, by the end of Constantine's reign, was able to summon a synod of 270 bishops. It became a rallying point for all the forces of discontent in the district, and gave rise to outrageous manifestations in the roaming bodies of **Circumcellions** (= round the cottages), whose violence spread terror through the country. The better Donatists, of course, repudiated these abuses.

The party was still powerful in the days of Augustine (fifth century).

Points for Inquiry and Study.—Make a picture of the state of the Church in the Decian persecution from Cyprian's letters. Read the letter of Dionysius of Alexandria. Study the evidences of the large numbers and social rank of the Christians in this period (Orr). Compare the different estimates of the character of Constantine. Illustrate the Diocletian persecution from Eusebius.

Books.—For history, see Gibbon; Stanley's *Eastern Church*; Bigg's *Platonists of Alexandria*; Constantine the Great in "Home Library."

CHAPTER XI

THE AGE OF THE GREAT PERSECUTIONS : VICTORY OF CHRISTIANITY (CONTINUED) (A.D. 250-324)

I. Establishment of Christianity—Constantine's later Years.—The Christians not unnaturally were as men that dreamed at the great revolution which had taken place in the state of their affairs. By one turn of the wheel they saw themselves raised from the lowest depths of abasement and suffering, and their religion placed on the throne of the empire.

When, however, we speak of the establishment of Christianity by Constantine, we must beware of importing into that phrase the associations of modern alliances of Church and State. On the one hand, the position of the Church in its relation to the empire was very different from that held by the pagan religion. The old Roman religion was part of the state; it had no independent existence, no rights, no jurisdiction of its own. Its officers were state officials, and the emperor himself was Pontifex Maximus. In fact the Roman state establishment was not abolished till the reign of the Emperor Gratian, near the end of the century (A.D. 382). The Christian Church was in quite a different position. It had grown up independently of the state,

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and possessed a vast organisation of its own. It had its own office-bearers, its own laws, its own canons of discipline, its own councils, etc. It was an *imperium in imperio* which the state did not create, but could only recognise. On the other hand, no formal alliance was entered into between Church and State such as we are familiar with in modern times. The establishment of Christianity was not an act done at once, but grew up from a series of proclamations, letters, edicts, enactments, gifts, appeals in disputes, meetings of councils, etc., and only gradually took shape as time went on.

The following are some of the chief heads : (1) There were *proclamations* of the emperor, publicly announcing himself a Christian, restoring their liberty to the Christians, ordering restitution of property, and recommending the Christian religion to his subjects. (2) The emperor encouraged everywhere the *building* and *repairing* of churches, contributing liberally from his own funds to the expenses. (3) He extended his *Christian legislation* and increased the *privileges of the clergy*. One important measure was the legalising of the decisions of the Church in civil disputes where parties preferred to take their case before the bishops. Another was the conferring on the Church the right to receive bequests. (4) The *public acts* of the state were purified from pagan associations, and conformed to Christian principles. A law had already been passed in A.D. 321 enforcing the civil observance of Sunday (*dies solis*) to the extent of suspending all legal business and military exercises on that day. (5) The emperor exercised the authority

which the Church conceded to him of *summoning councils* for the settlement of doctrinal disputes, and otherwise took part in ecclesiastical affairs. The chief example of this was the summoning of the great **Council of Nicæa**, in A.D. 325, to decide the Arian controversy. (6) While Christianity was thus protected and privileged, *paganism was tolerated*, or suffered to dwindle away under the shadow of royal disfavour, except in special instances, where rites of a licentious character were forcibly suppressed. The above were no doubt substantial advantages to the Church; yet through them the Church was drawn into the sphere of earthly politics, and the ill-defined boundaries between civil and ecclesiastical jurisdiction led to the gravest evils. The victory of the Church in the state marks at the same time the beginning of an era of secularisation and declension, from which **Monasticism** was a species of reaction.

It does not fall within the limits of this sketch to recount the later events of Constantine's reign. Even in this later period it is just to acknowledge that Constantine is distinguished by many **great and striking qualities**. His life remains unstained by private vices; he maintained, with slight exception, the policy of toleration with which he set out; he took a sincere interest in the progress of the Christian cause, and laboured to the best of his knowledge and ability for the peace and unity of the Church. Even the dark **domestic tragedies** of his life in A.D. 326 are too much wrapped in mystery to enable us to apportion fairly what measure of blame attaches to him.

On the other hand, it is not difficult to see in him a growing elation and complacency in himself as an instrument chosen by God to fulfil His purposes—a consciousness not sufficiently tempered by the feeling of personal unworthiness. With this tendency to self-elation went a strong dash of personal vanity and growing love of splendour, seen not only in the adornment of his person in robes of Oriental sumptuousness, but in the gratification of expensive tastes in building. The most conspicuous example of this was the rearing of his new and splendid capital—Constantinople (dedicated A.D. 330). The lavish expenditure on this city and on the gorgeous establishment of his court involved him in the necessity of imposing heavy taxation on his subjects, so that his reign came to be regarded as despotic and oppressive. Even on the subject of his blameworthy self-exaltation account should be taken of the temptations to which he was exposed, and of the extravagant adulation he received from the Christians around him. One of the most remarkable facts in his career is that while the patron of Christianity, the friend of bishops, judge of their controversies, president in their councils, a preacher and exhorter to Christian living, he himself did not receive baptism till the last days of his life (A.D. 337). We may, despite it all, find much in Constantine not unworthy of the great repute he has always had in the Church.

2. The Church Outside the Empire—Manichæism.—The Gospel by the time now reached had penetrated into many countries outside the bounds of the Roman

Empire. There had long been Christians in **Arabia**; a Gothic bishop was present at the Council of Nicæa; **Armenia**, under Tiridates, at first a violent persecutor, had been persuaded to receive the Gospel from Gregory the Illuminator about A.D. 302; **Georgia** received Christianity about A.D. 326. **Persia**, too, had large numbers of Christians, who were soon to undergo a fierce persecution. The Gospel found its way into **Ethiopia** (Abyssinia) through two captive youths, Edesius and Frumentius, one of whom afterwards (under Athanasius) became the bishop of the Church.

In connection with Persia, notice must be taken of the rise in the latter part of the third century of the form of heresy known as **Manichæism**. In general, Manichæism is a mixture of Persian dualism with ideas borrowed from Christianity and Gnosticism. Its fantastic ideas might seem to put it beyond serious consideration; but it is to be remembered that it had fascination enough to enslave for nine years even such an intellect as Augustine's, and that, despite persecution, it went on propagating itself for centuries, giving rise to sects in the Middle Ages, which were no small trouble to the ruling powers (Paulicians, Cathari, etc.). The rise of Manichæism was coincident with the accession of a new Persian dynasty (the Sassanidæ), and of a great revival of Zoroastrianism.

The founder of the sect, **Mani**, was a young and talented Persian, who under Sapor I. (A.D. 240-72),¹ conceived the idea of bringing about a fusion of the Zo-

¹ The dates in Mani's life are quite uncertain.

roastrian and Christian religions. He had to flee, and in the course of extensive travels (India, etc.) evolved his religious scheme into definite form. Returning to Persia on the death of Sapor, he met at first with a flattering reception, but finally was denounced as a heretic and flayed alive (A.D. 277?). The system is a piece of extravagant mythology from first to last. It starts with the dualistic conception of a Kingdom of Good (Light) and a Kingdom of Evil (Darkness). The Kingdom of Evil invades the Kingdom of Good, and bears off from it a portion of its light substance. It is these particles of light imprisoned in the chaotic elements of this lower world which give to the latter its mingled character. They suffer acutely, it is supposed, in being thus held in material bonds. The Manichæans spoke of this as the crucifixion of the Eternal Christ throughout creation. Creation (organisation) is an expedient for their liberation. Man is created by the evil powers that the higher elements might be more securely bound ; but the concentration aids, instead of retarding, the process of evolution. Redemption is through a higher power (the "Primeval Man"), identified with the Spirit of the Sun, or Mithras. The end of the development is the total separation of the light from the darkness. Mani formed a **Church**, with two grades of members : (1) the auditors, or outer circle ; and (2) the elect, or sacerdotal caste, the "perfect" of the Manichæan sect. These did no work, but were maintained by the auditors. Augustine wrote elaborate refutations of the system.

3. Theology—The Monarchian Heresies.—As the se-

cond century was the period of the Gnostic heresies, so the third century is pre-eminently the period of what are known as the Monarchian heresies. We have reserved a brief connected account of these to the present point. They arose partly as a reaction against the doctrine of the Trinity, developed by the Apologists and old Catholic Fathers, which seemed to put in jeopardy the unity (*monarchia*) of God; and partly as a protest against the subordinationist doctrines of certain of the Fathers, which seemed to imperil the Christian interest of the true divinity of the Son.

The simplest form of reaction against Trinitarian views is an Ebionitic, humanitarian, or purely Unitarian view of Christ, and this we find developing itself in the end of the second century and beginning of the third. Of Jewish Ebionitism we spoke in the third chapter. In the Gentile Church we have an early form of Monarchianism in the *Alogi* (deniers of the Logos), an obscure sect of Asia Minor, about A.D. 170, who rejected the Gospel of St. John. At Rome pure Unitarianism was represented in the *Theodotians*, under Victor and Zephyrinus (A.D. 190-218), and the *Artemonites*, a few years later. Christ, in this view, was "mere man." The *Artemonites* were replied to in a book called *The Little Labyrinth*, by Caius, a Roman presbyter, who adduces against them the testimony of ancient hymns.

More remarkable was the type of Monarchianism produced by the Christological interest. Here the aim was to make sure that in Christ men had no secondary or derived being, but the absolute God; and this was

thought to be secured only by the assertion that in Christ the Father Himself had become incarnate and suffered. Hence the name **Patripassians** given to this party. The oldest representative of it we know of was *Praxeas*, at Rome (about A.D. 177-90), against whom Tertullian wrote a treatise. Praxeas tried to explain that Christ, according to the flesh, was "Son," but the divine element in Him was the "Father." He stayed himself upon the words, "I and My Father are one" (John x. 30). Tertullian claims to have converted him. A more subtle form of the same doctrine was taught under succeeding episcopates by *Noetus* (about A.D. 200) and his disciple *Cleomenes*. Noetus affirmed the capacity in God of existing in different *modes*. As *ingenerate*, God was Father; as *generate*, He was Son. Hippolytus wrote against Noetus. Both Tertullian and Hippolytus accuse the Roman bishops of the period of sympathy with this error. Origen, at a synod in Arabia (A.D. 244), had the satisfaction of recovering *Beryllus*, of Bostra, from a similar heresy.

The defect of these theories was their failure to do justice to the Trinitarian distinction plainly involved in the New Testament doctrine of God. This fault was met in the **Modalistic Trinitarianism** of *Sabellius*—the most completely evolved and longest enduring of these Monarchian heresies. Sabellius (a Libyan?) is first met with in Rome under the episcopate of Zephyrinus (A.D. 202-18) as an adherent of Cleomenes. He was excommunicated by Callistus (himself a Patripassian). His heresy had a powerful revival in North Africa about

A.D. 260, and reappeared in the fourth century as a reaction against Arianism (Marcellus). In principle its solution is the substitution of a Trinity of revelation for a Trinity of essence; a Trinity of modes or aspects of the one Divine Being for a Trinity of Persons. The one God (*Monas*) expands and contracts in successive revelations, as the arm may be outstretched and drawn back again. God revealed in the Law is the *Father*, in Jesus Christ is the *Son*, in the indwelling in believers is the *Spirit*. The incarnation is thus a passing mode of God's manifestation. Pushed to its issue, it means nothing more than a dynamical presence of God in the soul of Christ.

This yields the transition to the last phase of Monarchian doctrine, *viz.*, the **Dynamical Unitarianism** of *Paul of Samosata*, Bishop of Antioch, A.D. 260-70. Paul was a vain, ostentatious, theatrical man, of whom many discreditable things are related. He held, like the earlier Unitarians, that Christ was mere man, but affirmed a union of the Divine Logos (or reason) with Christ in a degree predictable of no other. Through this interpenetration by the Divine power Christ advances by "progressive development" till He becomes God, or is raised to Divine rank. Deity here only means that Christ was deemed worthy for His peculiar excellence of Divine honours—not that He became God in nature. It was apotheosis; deification by favour. Two influential synods were held at Antioch on the subject of Paul's heresy (A.D. 264 and 269), at the second of which he was condemned. He held, however, by his palace and dignities till forcibly expelled three years later (A.D. 272).

4. Church Teachers and Literature of the Period.—The Church teachers of this period are not men of the mental stature of the great Fathers of the previous age, but they are interesting characters, and took an active part in the Church life of their day. Among the Greek writers, the chief interest centres in the school of Origen—the Alexandrian school—graced by such names as Dionysius of Alexandria, Gregory Thaumaturgus, Firmilian of Cappadocia, and Pamphilus of Cæsarea.

Dionysius of Alexandria has already been before us as a witness to the facts of the Decian persecution. He was a man of the utmost mildness and conciliatoriness of disposition, and on this account his advice and mediation were much sought after in the various disputes of the Church. He was born about A.D. 190 of wealthy parents, and in early life was brought to faith in Christ. He attached himself to Origen; was made presbyter in A.D. 233; became head of the catechetical school in Alexandria; in A.D. 247 or 248 was elected bishop. He suffered loss and exile in the Decian and Valerian persecutions, but returned at the peace under Gallienus. He died A.D. 265. A good many fragments of his works and some of his letters remain to us.

Not unlike Dionysius in some respects was a second great pupil of Origen—**Gregory Thaumaturgus** (the wonder-worker). Gregory's original name was Theodorus, and his surname was given him on account of the repute he came to have as a miracle-worker. The accounts of these miracles, however, are late. In a *Panegyric on Origen*, delivered when leaving the school

at Cæsarea, he gives a full account of his life up to that time. He was born at Neo-Cæsarea, in Pontus, about A.D. 210, of noble and wealthy parents. Led accidentally to Cæsarea, in Palestine, he was arrested by the genius of Origen, and became his most devoted disciple. His soul became knit to Origen, as he says, like the soul of Jonathan to David. He remained with Origen five years (c. A.D. 233-38). About A.D. 240 he became bishop of his native city, and had such success that, at his death about A.D. 270, it is said there were only seventeen pagans remaining. His evangelising activity was incessant, but he erred in too great concession to pagan customs. Like all Origen's pupils, Gregory was a man of liberal, candid, cultured mind, actuated by a strong love of truth, and of earnest and glowing piety. Several of his genuine writings remain to us.

Firmilian, Bishop of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, was one of the most influential bishops of his time, but does not seem to have written much. Origen took refuge with him during the persecution of Maximin in A.D. 235. A letter to Cyprian denouncing Stephen of Rome is all we have from his pen.

Mention must be made finally of a member of the school of Alexandria who did splendid service to the cause of sacred learning in the end of the third century—**Pamphilus of Cæsarea**, founder of the famous library in that city, and friend of Eusebius. Pamphilus was a native of Phœnicia, and, like the others named, came from a wealthy family. He studied at Alexandria under Pierius, and there contracted an unbounded admiration

for Origen. Removing to Cæsarea, he devoted himself to the great task of his life—the collection and copying of MSS. of the Scriptures, of commentaries, and other works of value. The literary treasures thus amassed were of priceless worth, and furnished Eusebius with ample material for his literary undertakings. In the fifth year of the Diocletian persecution Pamphilus was thrown into prison, and was finally martyred, with eleven others, in A.D. 309. He wrote in conjunction with Eusebius an elaborate work, *The Defence of Origen*. So intense was Eusebius's appreciation of this good man—"the holy and blessed Pamphilis," as he calls him—that after his martyrdom he adopted his name as part of his own.

Origen, however, had also his opponents, of whom the principal was **Methodius**, Bishop of Olympius, in Lycia (later of Tyre), who perished under Maximin about A.D. 311. We have from him a mystical dialogue in praise of virginity, *The Banquet of the Ten Virgins*. Only fragments remain of his attacks on Origen's views of creation, pre-existence, the resurrection, etc.

It was formerly mentioned that the Alexandrian theologians were speculative, idealising, Platonising, allegorising in their tendency, liberal in their whole attitude to culture.¹ Before the century closed, however, we note the beginnings of another school—the **Antiochian**—which was to have a long and influential history as the rival of the Alexandrian. This second school is marked from the commencement by a sober, matter-of-fact ten-

¹ See above, chap. ix.

dency, a preference of Aristotelianism to Platonism, and an adherence to a strictly grammatical and historical method of exegesis. Its founder was **Lucian**, who, like the heretical Bishop Paul, was a native of Samosata. Lucian himself fell under suspicion of unsound views, and was separated from the Church during three episcopates. He was restored to the Church, carried on his school with distinguished success, and finally crowned his career by an heroic martyrdom in A.D. 311 or 312. His method was predominatingly exegetical, and his style of exegesis was grammatical and literal. His school is the reputed fountain-head of the Arian heresy. Later it had such distinguished representatives as Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Theodoret. A creed attributed to Lucian was presented to a Council of Antioch in A.D. 341.

The Latin writers of the period may be more summarily alluded to. Commodian (about A.D. 250) wrote *Instructions for Christian Living*, and an apologetic poem against Jews and Gentiles, both in rude Latin hexameters. A little earlier Julius Africanus (died about A.D. 240), the first Christian chronographer, had drawn up a work, in five books, setting forth the course of sacred and profane history till the reign of Elagabalus. The two Latin writers who belong properly to our period are **Arnobius** and **Lactantius**, both apologists in the time of the Diocletian persecution. The apology of Arnobius, a teacher of rhetoric, *Against the Nations*, is in seven books, and, as might be expected in a recent convert, is not very mature in Christian doctrine. It is, however,

an able, learned, and convincing defence of the Christians from many of the objections brought against them, and an effective enough exposure of the folly of idolatry. Arnobius lays stress on the unique and well-attested character of Christ's miracles and the excellence of the Christian morality. Lactantius is reputed the most classical and elegant of all the Christian writers. His apologetic work, *The Divine Institutes*, in seven books, was, in its finished form, dedicated to Constantine. He wrote also a work, *On the Death of the Persecutors*, narrating the judgments of God on the persecutors of the Christians from Nero onwards. He died in old age, about A.D. 330.

A last name to be noticed is that of the Greek writer and great Church historian, **Eusebius of Cæsarea**, who, though he belongs properly to the next age, yet begins his activity in this. He is indeed the link between the old and the new order. He was born probably about A.D. 260. His early associations are with Cæsarea, of which city he became bishop about A.D. 315. He held this position to his death in A.D. 339 or 340. Eusebius was a man of extraordinary learning and industry, and his works form a little library of themselves. They are of all classes—historical, apologetic, exegetical, critical, doctrine, orations, etc. Reference need only be made here to his *Ecclesiastical History*, extending from the birth of Christ to the defeat of Licinius in A.D. 323; his two apologetic works, the *Evangelical Preparation* (fifteen books), and the *Evangelical Demonstration* (twenty books, ten extant); his *Chronicle* (based on

Julian Africanus, part in Jerome's translation); and his *Life of Constantine*, a panegyric rather than a biography, yet important for facts. The works of Eusebius are often desultory and ill-arranged; he has little independent merit as a theologian, and inclines to laxity of opinion; he plays the courtier with too much success to "our pious emperor"; yet his writings are invaluable as sources of information, and for the extracts they preserve. In the use of authorities he shows himself most accurate, painstaking and faithful—a virtue of the first rank.

5. Points in Church Constitution and Worship.—The chief matters requiring to be glanced at here may be gathered up under a few heads.

(1) **Church Buildings.**—These became common in the course of the third century, and were greatly multiplied after the victory of Constantine. The model usually followed was that of the *Roman basilica*. The *basilica* was a building of oblong shape, which served the double purpose of a hall of justice and place of concourse. The body of the building consisted of a central portion or nave and side aisles, one or more, separated off by pillars. At the upper end, in a semi-circular recess, were the *prætor's* chair, the seats of the judges, and in front the altar, where incense was burned and oaths were taken. This form of building readily adapted itself to Christian purposes.¹ The larger churches stood in a court or *atrium*, surrounded by colonnades. The doors opened into a vestibule or *narthex*, which was as

¹ The description of the Church of Tyre, in *Eus.*, x. 4, may be compared.

far as penitents were permitted to approach. The congregation assembled in the *nave*, or broad middle part of the church. At the upper end a railed-off portion was reserved for the choir and inferior orders of clergy—the *chancel* (fr., *cancellus*, a railing). Here also on one side stood the pulpit (*ambo*). Finally, the semi-circular part (*apse*) formed the special sanctuary. The *prætor*'s seat became the bishop's throne; around him sat the presbyters and deacons; the altar in front became the communion table (now also called *altar*), etc. In the more splendid churches all the parts, doors, pillars, apse and galleries, were finely adorned. In contradiction to later practice the church was sometimes so placed that the rising sun might strike upon its *front* (so at Tyre).

(2) **Development of Church Offices.**—In the third century Church offices became greatly multiplied. The clergy were now divided into two groups—the **Greater Orders** (*ordines majores*), consisting of bishops, presbyters and deacons; and the **Lesser Orders** (*ordines minores*), consisting of sub-deacons, readers, acolytes (attendants on the bishop), exorcists, precentors, door-keepers, catechists, etc. The distinction between clergy and laity was now firmly established.

(3) **Development of Church Service.**—If we may trust the oldest liturgies (that, *e.g.*, in the so-called *Apostolical Constitutions* from fourth century), the Church service had by the end of the third century become highly liturgical and elaborate. The service was now divided into two parts—catechumens, penitents, etc., being

dismissed before the Eucharistic celebration began. The Eucharistic service itself was highly complex and ornate, including long prayers, responses, prescribed actions of the priest. The clergy had distinctive vestments. Festival days were now observed—especially Easter and Pentecost. The whole period between these feasts were apparently observed as a time of gladness. Music in the Church was more highly developed. We have met with references to hymns, and there were now regular choristers and conductors. Baptism was generally connected with the above feast-days, and certain rites had gradually become connected with the original ceremony *e.g.*, trine immersion (thrice dipping of *head*), the sign of the cross on the forehead and breast, giving the baptised person milk and honey, unction on the head, a white robe, etc. The practice of exorcism had also become part of the ritual. Shortly before baptism the creed was imparted to the catechumen as a sort of password (*symbol*). Baptism in grave cases of sickness was administered by sprinkling (clinical baptism).

The discipline of the church was also made more elaborate. This followed from the prominence given to the idea of penance for the removal of post-baptismal sin. Penitents were now regularly classified into *weepers* (who prostrated themselves at church doors imploring restoration), *hearers* (who were allowed to hear the Scripture lessons and sermon), *kneelers* (who were admitted to the prayers, but in a kneeling posture), and *standers* (who were allowed to take part in the whole

worship standing).¹ The course of probation was often three or four years.

(4) **Development of Church Councils.**—Meetings of this kind sprang up informally in the latter half of the second century. They were at first quite local, one bishop inviting other bishops and clergy to confer with him on matters of common concern, and their decisions had no binding force on other churches. In these early councils presbyters and laymen took part as well as bishops; latterly only bishops appear to have voted. As councils assumed a more regular character they came to be distinguished into different kinds. (1) There was the *parochial* council of the bishop and the clergy of his city. (2) There were *provincial* councils, attended by the clergy of a whole province. These were generally held in the metropolitan city, and the bishop of that city presided. (3) Tertullian speaks of councils of a whole region (*regionis*)—*national* councils. (4) Finally, when the empire became Christian, and the emperor himself undertook the summoning of councils, there became possible councils of the whole Church—*ecumenical* councils. The first of these was the Nicene (A.D. 325). In reality these were almost exclusively *Greek* councils. The decrees of the councils were now compulsorily imposed by the emperors. As examples of councils may be mentioned those in Asia Minor about the Montanists and Easter, those in North Africa on heretical baptism, those in Antioch about Paul of

¹ Thus Schaff.

Samosata, the Council of Arles against the Donatists, the Council of Elvira in Spain (A.D. 306), etc.

(5) **Gradations of Rank in the Episcopate Itself.**—These sprang from the meetings of councils and other causes in the state of the Church. The bishops of the metropolitan cities soon attained from their position a higher rank than other bishops, and were known as **metropolitans**. The sanction of the metropolitan came ultimately to be necessary to the validity of the election of another bishop. This was followed in the fourth century by the elevation of the bishops of certain Churches deemed worthy of special honour to the wider jurisdiction of **patriarchs**. Such Churches were Antioch, Alexandria and Rome, to which Constantinople (as new Rome) and Jerusalem were subsequently added—five in all. This, however, carries us beyond our special limits.

Our sketch has brought us to the triumph of Constantine, and formal adoption of Christianity as the religion of the empire. Ere, however, this consummation was reached, the Arian controversy had broken out (A.D. 318), and the Church was in flames from within, to the unconcealed delight of the pagan onlookers, and the intense chagrin of the emperor, who had hoped to find in this monotheistic faith a bond of peace in his dominions. The Nicene Council itself (A.D. 325) did little more than open new controversies, with which for half a century the world and Church were filled. Narrow-minded imperial interference made matters ever

worse. Over all the storms looms the noble figure of Athanasius, who appears already upon the scene before our period closes. To him the Church owes nearly all its real guidance in the distractions of the age that follows. *Athanasius contra mundum.* On the verge of this new era we cease our survey.

Points for Inquiry and Study.—Study Constantine's later career, and contrast him with contemporaries. Read the *Fundamental Epistle* of Mani and other Manichæan expositions given in Augustine's works. Read the account of Paul of Samosata in *Eus.* vii. 30. Study more fully the contrast of the Alexandrian and Antiochian schools of theology. Read Gregory's *Panegyric* on Origen. Read the so-called *Liturgy of Clement* in *Apostolical Constitutions*. Compare different theories of the origin of Church buildings (see Lanciani, *Pagan and Christian Rome*).

Books.—Gibbon, Neander, and Pressensé on Manichæism; Hatch's *Organization of Early Churches*; Farrar's *Lives of Fathers* (cf. Pressensé); Lanciani as above; Brace's *Gesta Christi*; Church histories on theology and worship.

TABLE OF ROMAN EMPERORS.

		A.D.	Reigned.
Augustus	.	14	
Tiberius	.	14-37	23 years
Caligula	.	37-41	4 ,,
Claudius	.	41-54	13 ,,
Nero	.	54-68	14 ,,
Galba	.	68-69	
Otho	.	69	
Vitellius	.	69	
Vespasian	.	69-79	10 ,,
Titus	.	79-81	2 ,,
Domitian	.	81-96	15 ,,
Nerva	.	96-98	2 ,,
Trajan	.	98-117	19 ,,
Hadrian	.	117-138	21 ,,
Antoninus Pius	.	138-161	23 years
Marcus Aurelius	.	161-180	19 ,,
Commodus	.	180-192	12 ,,
Pertinax	.	193	
Julianus	.	193	
Septimius Severus	.	193-211	18 ,,
Caracalla	.	211-217	6 ,,
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{ Valerian	.	254-260	6 ,,
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Aurelian	.	270-275	5 ,,
Tacitus	.	275-276	1 ,,
Florianus	.	276	
Probus	.	276-282	6 ,,
Carus	.	282-283	1 ,,
{ Carinus	.	283-284	1 ,,
{ Numerian	.	283-284	1 ,,
{ Diocletian	.	284-305	21 ,,
{ Maximian	.	286-305	19 ,,
Constantius Chlorus	.	305-306	1 ,,
{ Galerius	.	305-311	6 ,,
Maxentius (Italy)	.	306-312	6 ,,
{ Licinius	.	307-323	16 ,,
{ Constantine the Great	.	306-337	31 ,,

APPENDIX I

EXPLANATION OF FRONTISPICE

1. The Good Shepherd (John x. 11). In Early Christian Art, the G. S. is always represented as bearing the sheep *on his shoulders* (Luke xv. 5). “Apuleia Crysopolis who lived seven years, 2 months: The Parents placed this to (the memory of) their very dear daughter.” Of very early date (first half of second century ?).
2. The Anchor, symbol of hope (Heb. vi. 19), set within the name DOMNA.
3. The Anchor. The Fish or ΙΧΘΥC, *i.e.* Ιησους Χριστος, Θεου Υιος, Θωτηρ: *Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour.* “The faithful (*i.e.* baptised) child of faithful (*i.e.* baptised) parents, Zosimus, here I lie: having lived 2 years, 1 month, 25 days.”
4. The Anchor: Dove (symbol of the Holy Spirit, Matt. iii. 16). URBICA, a design (like a ship) set within a circle (eternity ?). Of very early date (first half of 2nd cent. ?): so, probably, the central design has no such highly developed symbolical intention.
5. Orante, *i.e.* a figure (female generally) in the attitude of prayer (1 Tim. ii. 8): on other side a shepherd holding a (?) muletrum (milking pail) and leaning on a staff; a sheep, or goat (?) beside him. “Moses in his lifetime had this monument prepared for himself and his wife.”
6. Anchor, Fish, Bread (Eucharistic Bread ?). “Aegrilius Bottus Philadespotus, most sweet and dutiful (son). His parents erected this to his memory. He lived 9 years, 40 days.” MS. (?) memoriae sacrum, *i.e.* “sacred to his memory.” This monument is not a slab but an upright stele or pillar of square section.
7. Our Lord raising Lazarus. Our Lord is touching the head of Lazarus with the *virga potestatis*, or rod of power.

8. Sheep : Peacock (symbol of immortality?). "Aelia Victorina placed (this slab) to (the memory of) Aurelia Proba."

9. A Chirurgeon's outfit : forceps, etc. Part of a very long slab.

10. Dove perched on Olive Branch : Lamb : Anchor. In the 'stock' or transverse beam of the anchor *it may be* that we are to find a furtive representation of the Cross. "Faustinianus." Of very early date (first half of 2nd century?).

11. A 'modius' or corn measure filled with wheat : (also a sheaf of wheat on either side) : a figure standing by, holding, not the 'rod of power' as in nos. 7 and 13, but a roller for pressing along the rim of the modius, and so giving just measure. "Maximinus, who lived 23 years : the friend of all." This, like no. 9 and in part no. 12, is a *trade symbol*, not a religious symbol. The amiable Maximinus was probably a corn merchant.

12 Chi-Rho (first two letters of XPICTOC, Christ), commonly called "the Constantine monogram," with Alpha and Omega (Rev. i. 8); the whole set in a chaplet. The barrel denotes that SEVERUS was a vintner.

13. Raising of Lazarus (as in no. 7). Our Lord's head is encircled by a *nimbus* or halo. The inscription, in bad Latin, probably means, "Datus and Bonosa, the parents, placed this to the memory of their son Datus, who lived 20 years. In peace."

APPENDIX II

NOTE ON THE INSCRIPTIONS OF THE ACILII (See page 46)

For the drawings of these inscriptions, as stated in the Preface, I am indebted to the Rev. Archibald Paterson, B.D., now of Richmond, Surrey. They should, he thinks, probably be restored and identified as follows :—

1

ACILIO GLABRIONI	ACILIO GLABRIONI	
FILIO	or	FILIO
M' ACILII GLABRIONIS	M' ACILIUS GLABRIO	
Cos.	PATER.	

Deceased may have been the son of Manius Acilius Glabrio, consul in A.D. 124, the latter probably being the son of the consul of A.D. 91, who suffered under Domitian, in A.D. 95.

2

MANIUS ACILIUS VERUS	
CLARISSIMUS VIR,	
ET (?) PRISCILLA CLARISSIMA	{ PUELLA (?)
	{ FEMINA (?)

May be the children of Manius Acilius Glabrio, consul in A.D. 152 [son of the consul A.D. 124], and Vera Priscilla, who is known from an inscription to have been the wife of a Manius Acilius Glabrio. The Manius Acilius Glabrio who was her husband may, however, have been the consul of this name in A.D. 186 [son of the consul of A.D. 152]. In this case the children will be *their* offspring.

A fragment probably of—

ACILIA

M[ARCI] ACILII,

belonging to the family of Marcus Acilius Vibius Faustinus, who was one of the Salii before A.D. 170; or to the family of Marcus Acilius Priscus Egrilius Plarianus, who lived at the same time.

Κλαυδίου Ακειλίου Οναλέριου [Λαμπροτατον] νεανισκον.

It is known that Claudius Acilius Cleoboles (grandson of the consul of A.D. 186) derived his name Claudius from adoption by Tiberius Claudius Cleoboles, consul suffectus (year uncertain). The name Valerius is from the mother's side. The inscription cannot be earlier than the third century.

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